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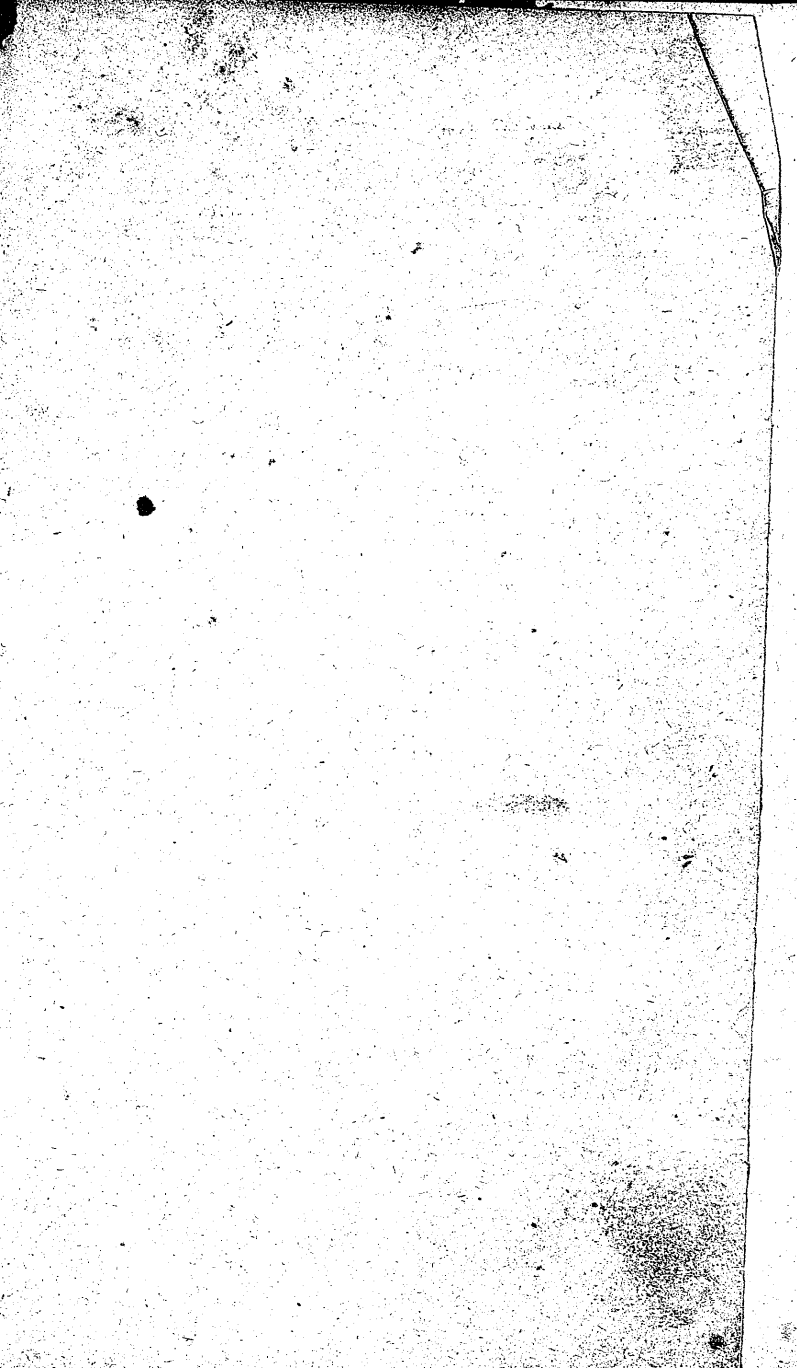
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Psalms

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THE

PSALMS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE,

THE

ONLY SONGS OF ZION.

AN

A P P E A L

TO THE CHURCHES IN BEHALF OF THIS ORDINANCE OF GOD.

BY DONALD C. McLAREN,
"MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL."

"Praise ye the Lord; Sing unto Him; Sing Psalms."

GENEVA, N. Y.

IRA MERRELL, PRINTER, SENECA-STREET.

MDCCLX.

1840

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PSALMS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE, &c.

The glory which redounds to God from the works of nature is not a contingency, but is a sure result, amply provided for by the unfading impress of divine perfections, which the divine agency in creation left for that end on all things in the kingdom of nature. In the kingdom of grace, in that bright sphere illumined by redemption purchased and applied, glory to God in the highest is not suspended on uncertainties, but is infallibly secured by the direct agency of God in the exercise and development of his perfections in the works of grace. All his works of nature and grace, in praising him, give back what they have received, and reflect the lustre which his own excellency lends them for that use. The intelligent celebration of his glory, manifested in creation, providence and redemption, is due to the Lord of Hosts from all creatures endowed with intelligence. This is due from the redeemed, and is ordained to be their chief end and employment. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." The celebration of his praise in words sung with the voice, is a prominent part of the worship, which God hath appointed for his church in the earth; and his holy agency is strikingly exhibited in making the necessary provision for securing the proper and acceptable performance of this great duty. What the Lord hath thus provided, in the holy jealousy with which he ever watches over his praise, and for an end, so nearly concerning the interests of his glory in the services of his church, all should value, and with reverence apply to the praise of his glory. It becomes his worshippers with thoughtful attention to inquire, What is the provision, which the Lord hath made and appointed to be used in observing the ordinance of praise? That he has provided Songs of Praise, is known to all who read the Bible.

We propose to show, that the Psalms contained in the holy Scriptures are the only songs of praise, which the Church is warranted by the express appointment of God to sing in his worship.

This is a subject which, from the nature and importance of it, should be investigated strictly according to the sound

protestant principles laid down in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. 1, sec. 8. "The Old Testament in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek, being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them." Whatever the authentical word determines, cannot be set aside by any thing that may be lacking or imperfect in a translation of it. Whatever doctrines or duties the authentical word inculcates, should be received and obeyed in the church where translations only are in common use. If the Hebrews had continued to speak their native tongue, and now formed a part of the Christian Church, they would have, in the sacred scriptures, songs of praise which they would be bound to sing, as their fathers were of old. If all nations had spoken, and had continued to speak to the present time, the Hebrew language, Christian nations would then have, in what would be their native tongue, inspired songs of praise, which they would be required in the word of God to sing in his worship. But, as many languages differing from the Hebrew are spoken, translations are necessary. What is the true and proper end which the work of translation is designed to answer? It is simply to transfer the word of God from the original into another language. Its province is to change nothing but the language. Translations do not alter ordinances and privileges, which God hath instituted in his church; what these were before, they remain after, the translation is made. Do the original scriptures confer on us the privilege, and lay on us the duty of singing inspired songs in divine praise? This should be distinctly set forth in every translation. So also, supposing the Hebrew were our common and native language, then, in that case the authentical scripture would present us with many psalms contained in one distinct book, and all fitly prepared for our lips in singing praises to God. Every translation of the sacred books should do the same thing for those whose language it adopts, that is, should furnish a translation of the Psalms fitly prepared for being sung, and having the same relation to the original Psalms, which the other books in the translation have to their correspondent books in the original. Such a translation of the Psalms, the Church should aim to have in all languages into which the scripture is translated. Were this attained, there would then be, on the ground of divine institution, unity in the Church's praises throughout the whole earth.

These preliminary remarks are necessary to obviate misapprehensions, and to present the question under consideration in its true light. It does not directly concern the respective merits of different versions of the Psalms ; but is a question involving the principle on which every version should be made, as it immediately concerns the use we are required to make of, what is antecedent to all versions, the Psalms contained in the authentical scriptures. The question about versions will be easily adjusted, when it is once settled that these Psalms were designed for universal and perpetual use in showing forth the praises of God. That they were given by their infinitely wise author for this purpose, we shall now endeavor to prove, we hope, to the satisfaction of our readers, who are requested particularly to consider,

I. That the Book of Psalms is a *Collection of Psalms*, made by divine authority. They were dictated by the Spirit to the holy men who composed them. All the psalms thus given at different times by inspiration were at length collected into one book ; none of them were lost, no others were admitted. That book, proceeding from infinite wisdom, mercy and truth, is perfect and entire, and perfectly adapted to answer the end for which it was intended. These principles, which cannot be called in question without disputing the canonical authority of the book itself, evince, that it is a divinely authorized collection of sacred hymns. This incontestible fact will not be overlooked by those, who examine into the subject with an unprejudiced desire to know the truth, and to arrive at practical conclusions on which they may act, in offering praise, with a conscience void of offence toward God. He did himself provide this collection, and in a way too that kept it free from all error, imperfection and unfitness. He did not see fit to entrust this work to the wisdom, the piety or poetic talent of men. In supplying the church with the means, always needed, of observing the ordinance of praise, human agency was employed ; but that agency was wholly and immediately subordinate to the Spirit, and controlled by his will and infallible influence, not only in the composition of the Psalms at first, but also in the *final arrangement and collection* of them into one distinct book. They were cited by our Lord *collectively*, as "the Psalms," Luke, 24.44 ; and also, as "the Book of Psalms," Luke 20.42. That they were disposed in the same order, which they now have, in relation to each other, appears from the mention that is made of the second Psalm, Acts 13.33. This book therefore contains a copious

and faultless collection of psalms, sanctioned by the highest authority. We should regard this collection as a whole, to be preserved inviolate; and every psalm in it as a constituent and perfect part of a perfect whole. A scriptural psalmody is not any thing and every thing which people may choose to sing; nor should we think of a scriptural Psalmody, as if it were, here and there, a *little* every where and the *whole* no where, broken into fragments, scattered about in all versions, tossed to and fro, by every wind and wave, on the unstable sea of "circumstances," like the floating remains of a wreck. A psalmody truly scriptural is confined to the canonical collection of Psalms. The inspired psalms, being written at different times and by different individuals, though mostly by David, were, in the first instance, separate and disconnected from one another. They were finally all collected into one book by themselves. Now this fact, that the Book of Psalms is a collection, and that this collection was made under the immediate superintendence of God, has a direct bearing on the subject we are considering. Let it be brought to bear on all existing systems of psalmody, and what would be the effect? Let all the collections in use in the several denominations be gathered together and examined. How many of them would agree with the collection in the authentical Scriptures? Some of them would not agree with it at all? Others, like paraphrases, in the department of psalms, may have a general agreement with it, though in some places not even that: as collections, however, taking into view the human hymns they contain, they are far removed from being correspondent to the collection in the authentical scriptures. There is another unpretending collection, well spoken of where it is well known; and once, in better times, more used, and better used, than it now is. It is called "the Old Psalms," "David's Psalms," "the scripture Psalms," "Rouse's version," and is sometimes designated by well-meaning persons ignorantly, and by ill-meaning persons sneeringly, in ways unbecoming, and occasionally profane. It has been commended by many great and good men: but it contains in itself its best recommendation, for this collection is, almost word for word, in English answerable to what the authentical collection is in Hebrew. Is not this therefore a purely scriptural psalmody, recognizing the perfection and *validity* of all which the Lord did by inspired men, not only in making the Psalms, but also in making a *collection* of them?

We cannot pass from this argument, without observing fur-

ther, that the same provisions, which guarded the purity and entireness of the whole Bible, as a collection of sacred books, were applicable in their full force to the Book of Psalms, for its preservation, pure and entire, as a *collection* of sacred hymns. Apocryphal books were not admitted into the former, nor apocryphal psalms into the latter. The same considerations of duty, which obligated the church to exclude apocryphal books from a place in the Holy Scriptures, also forbade their being used in the church in place of, or esteemed in point of authority and excellency on a footing of equality with, the inspired books. A human writing or tradition might be free from perceptible error: yet, however good it might be, still being destitute of the perfection which inspiration imparts, it must be totally unfit for the sphere exclusively appropriated to divine revelation. The traditions prevalent among the Jews in the time of our Saviour were not inserted in the scriptures, were not even committed to writing, and yet they usurped the place which belonged only to the written word of God. How could that be? Did not the Jews acknowledge the divine authority of the Sacred Book? They did; but in practice they denied it, by the use that was made of those traditions, the esteem in which they were held, and the paramount authority ascribed to them. Hence it was said "Ye make the word of God of none effect through your traditions which ye have delivered." What they did in their adherence to their tradition, though done professedly in the service of God, and perhaps with great zeal, was rejected. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Mat. 15.9. There is a prohibition fearfully sanctioned, in force in all ages, against man's adding any thing to the word of God, or to any part of it, directly or indirectly.

As it was wholly unlawful for the Jews in old time, by any direct act, to introduce apocryphal, that is, uninspired hymns into the authorized Psalm Book, so it was equally unlawful for them to do that *indirectly*, by introducing human, that is, apocryphal hymns into the church and worship of God, or to do any thing which would imply that they were worthy to be used instead of, or to be esteemed equal to the inspired psalms. What was in this respect unlawful then, *before* the volume of inspiration was finished, must be equally unlawful now, *after* it is brought to perfection. If human odes had been thus used for the end for which inspired psalms were given, it would have been without allowance from God: in no instance

could they have been thus used without casting dishonor on the canonical collection of psalms. Those who draw near to God, would meet with the inquiry, "Who hath required this at your hands?" and the pure in heart, in offering sacrifices of praise, would desire to give to that solemn inquiry the answer of a good conscience towards God. Services purporting to be acts of worship, might be costly and delightful to those who performed them; but if they contravened divine appointment, they would be a vain oblation. The most perfect concert of human voices, the sweetest melody of music that was ever heard in the temple of God would be an offence unto him, if it had been in discord with the voice of his authority and truth speaking in his word.

The whole Bible, and it only, is to be used for the end for which it was given and for which it was fully fitted by its all-wise Author the Lord our God; and if a human writing be used for the same end, an apocryphal use is made of it, though no claim of inspiration should be set up in its behalf: and just so far, and as often as any human writing is used in a way and for an end proper only to God's word, his word is discredited in being practically charged with insufficiency. So also the Book of Psalms, and it *only*, is to be used for the end for which it was given and for which it was fitted by the infinite understanding and boundless grace of God; and if human hymns are used for the same ends, an apocryphal use is made of them. It will not be denied, that the Psalms were at first given, and afterwards collected into one book, for the purpose of being sung in the social worship of God. That poetic book, being a constituent part of his written word, is a part of the rule of faith and practice binding on men; and as such, its perpetual authority is recognized in the New Testament. But that book was adapted and designed for an end peculiar to itself, that is, to be sung in religious worship. The appropriation of the Psalms to this end was not itself loosely dependant on the option, the judgment, or the taste of the worshippers of God at that time, but was morally obligatory on them by the great law of their King, which required them to appropriate every gift of his to the end which he designed it to answer; a law no less binding now than formerly.

II. In the history of Psalmody, it is an important fact, placed beyond dispute by the highest testimony, that the church has been furnished with *only* one Book or collection of Psalms, *wholly* and *immediately* from God himself.

It forms a constituent and inseparable part of the word of God to men, and is the only collection with the hallowed stamp of his authority upon it, which his church ever had or ever will have. This venerable and holy Psalter, with all its original excellencies unimpaired by time, is still extant, and always will be, in the oracles of God committed to his church. Being placed in our hands by the God we praise, should we not open it in his fear, and sing from it when we make mention of his praises and of his great goodness?

When this book was first given, did not the very bestowment of a gift so precious, suitable and timely, lay an obligation on the people of God at the time cordially to receive and use it? It is still his gift, possessing the same value, holding the same place, and bearing the same authority which it did at first; and does not all this furnish evidence of its being his will that those forms of praise, framed by himself, should be still used in his worship every where and always? The doing of God did all that was done in setting up psalmody in his church. What he did was well done, and remains unchanged. It was an institution in all respects divine. It is so still, coming down to us without any alteration made by its divine Founder, to whom belongs wisdom to know if any change or addition were necessary, and the sole right, in that case, to make it. Divine donation supplied, and divine institution determined what was to be sung; and none in the church are empowered to revoke any, the least, thing in an ordinance which the Lord hath appointed, or to refuse any means or privilege which he hath seen fit to provide for their aid in his worship. If the Israelites in ancient times had refused to sing the psalms, would it not have been an act of rebellion? Are not the churches in these times chargeable with a sinful departure from divine institution in this solemn part of worship, when they reject the scripture psalms, or alter them, or add to them, or substitute human poems in their place? What is wrong in their so doing is on many accounts exceedingly wrong.

When this noble Book of Praises was first completed, and committed to the church, a better could not have been obtained from another source. Every one will admit that, at that time, it would not have been improved, had any thing been taken from it or added to it. A deed would have been done, combining great irreverence and ingratitude toward God, if the elders and congregation of Israel had determined to suspend the adoption of that sacred book, on the judgment which

uninspired poets might form respecting it. How would it appear to us in the retrospect, to see the ancient church, after receiving from heaven an inspired book, submitting it for revision to uninspired poets, however pious or renowned they might have been? And what would the ancient church have thought, had they foreseen, in the prospect, the church in the latter days, doing this very thing. Can the combined wisdom of the world make that better which God made very good? The natural genius of Homer, joined to the fervent piety of David, would have failed to produce a work comparable to the book of Psalms, which, adequately translated into the language of ancient Greece, would have far surpassed the most finished specimens of Grecian poetry. Well then—What is modern poetry but a kind of second-hand imitation of the Greek model? And is not the fine taste, predominant in the polite learning of the world, for the most part, formed according to a standard taken from the footstool of old paganism? Shall the child of such ancestry—shall the poetry or taste of this world, though approaching in seeming meekness under a Christian garb, be allowed to intrude itself into “the house of God, which is the church of the living God,” to find fault there, and to dictate to his worshippers what and how they should sing to his praise? Meet it on the threshold. Be not lulled by its soft tones, nor shamed should it sneer, nor dazzled by its showy ornaments, nor awed by its high airs. Ask the fine poetry, which claims to have so much to do in preparing praises for the church of God, Whence it came, and whence it obtained its boasted treasures? And it will gracefully point, not to Sinai, or Zion, or any other mount lighted by the truth of the true God, but to Parnassus, the mount of Apollo and of the Muses, the feigned centre and summit of heathen literature, and to the poets that served the gods, and sung in the temples and around the altars of idolatry. “Thou shalt say unto it, get thee hence.” Isa. 30.22. The ancient poetry of the church, like the old sun in the heavens, has no equal, and is now as full of benign brightness for the good of men and the glory of God, as it was at first.

The metrical translation of the psalms, already referred to, preserves much of the peculiar form of Hebrew poetry, and expresses with signal force and simplicity, the sense of the original. In view of its great faithfulness as a translation, its versification is good. If it can be amended in the latter respect, without injury to it in the former respect, let it be done. Taking it as it is, it is the best collection of poems

and contains the best poetry, in the English language, that is, the best for religious worship and for immortal souls. Provided, that this or a new version, or any other version, were made absolutely without defect, in exact metre, giving as it should, the sense, the whole sense, and nothing but the sense, in the same order and connection in which it lies in the original, would it not be superior to every other book of poems, being possessed of excellencies derived to it from God, though presented to us through the medium of a translation? Would it not be perfect, as a *Psalm* or *Hymn Book*? Would it not be fit and sufficient for the church of God? Why not? If it was so in Hebrew, for the church *once*, why not in English for the church *now*? If this is laid aside, can a better be found to supply its place? Can human genius make a better? If the *whole* of it should not be laid aside, why should any *part* of it? Are misnamed imitations, made by men, preferable to the originals, made by the Lord himself? How would it sound, for a man to publish imitations of the whole Bible, to modify and change it, from what God made it, to what an ignorant, frail mortal may think it ought to be; and then to call that an imitation? Were any one to take up the Proverbs of Solomon, or the Epistle to the Romans, and revise and transpose it, leaving out some things and inserting others; who would not question his right thus to mutilate a sacred book; and who would not at once condemn a work of that kind, instead of receiving and using it in place of the original book, of which it would pretend to be an imitation? What is wrong in such pretended imitations, in reference to *one* part of the Bible, must be wrong in them in reference to *another* part. What is unwarrantable, yea sacrilegious in *prose*, cannot be right and religious in *poetry*.

In singing praise to the Lord, previously prepared forms of praise are necessary. He did not leave his favored Zion destitute of set forms of praise. He did more than to command them to be prepared—he prepared them himself. If the use of them is to be discontinued, if they are now to be regarded as no longer entitled to the place they once held in the high praises that ascend from earth to heaven,—who will prepare others, and say on grounds of truth, “The Lord hath required this at my hands?” There is no command to this effect given in the Bible; no direction to the ordinary ministers of the word to do this; no promise to raise up men endowed with the necessary gifts to do this. The Apostles performed no service of this kind. Nor does it appear that, by their or-

der, new psalms, differing from those long in use at Jerusalem, were introduced into the Gentile churches. If the scripture psalms were only designed for the Old Testament times, then that department of worship, which they once beautified and enriched, would be left empty and silent; and we would be left without rule or order, not knowing what to sing. But we are not so left, nor have we lost the high privilege of singing "what the Holy Ghost spake," as we may be assured, from the fact that God gave *one*, though *only* one Book of Psalms, and has not *withdrawn* it, which is a signification of his will, that this divine Psalter should be used,—exclusively, universally and perpetually used, in offering praise to Him.

III. The significant title of this book furnishes a strong argument in favor of its continued use in religious worship.

It was named by our Lord "the Book of Psalms," and was afterwards so called in a solemn Synod of the Apostles. Acts 1.20. The name employed to designate that portion of the Holy Scriptures, recognized and ratified its perpetual connection with the church's praises, for that name is appropriate to the compositions contained in that book, being expressive not only of their poetical structure and adaptation to music, but also of their divine origin, their spiritual nature, and religious use. This is to be taken as an intimation of his will, that they should be *psalms* in our estimation and in our use of them, and that those psalms and those only should be sung in his worship. Of similar import is the title which this book has in the Hebrew, *Sepher tehilim*, that is, the Book of Hymns or Praises; which plainly points out that the sacred book so named, or the prescribed forms it contains, are to be used in offering praise to God. Those are the best hymns which were ever composed, and it is the will of God that the best should be sung in his worship, to the praise of his great and holy name. The compositions which, in their import and entire structure, proceeded from divine inspiration, must be elevated in perfection, as well as in authority far above the best of human compositions. It is not pretended that other than the former were authorized under the Old Testament—why then under the New Testament dispensation, should they be set aside and human hymns be preferred to the divine and be substituted in their place? Will any one say that hymns constructed by uninspired men under the present dispensation, are better than the hymns or psalms given of old by inspiration of God? If they are not better, why should they have the preference? Why should unlicensed imitations be allow-

ed to usurp their place? Are they better than the originals? The ancient canonical psalmody is suited to the church now; if it were not, if a better were needed, there would be some intimation of this kind given. But on the supposition that better psalms and hymns were needed than those which were unquestionably sung by the church for many hundred years, extending down through the whole period of our Savior's personal ministry in the earth—even on that supposition, we must be confident in the conclusion that, as inspiration was necessary in making the sweet psalms then used, so plenary inspiration would be at least equally necessary in making psalms more perfect than those.

IV. That the Psalms were designed to be sung, appears from the descriptive name or epithet applied to David who wrote the most of them. He is called, expressly in his character of an inspired author, "the sweet psalmist of Israel." 2 Sam. 23.1.

He was not without design styled the Psalmist of Israel. It was not an unmeaning title. In mere adulation, or in obedience to common usage, men may give honorable titles to their fellow-men, who do not possess in themselves any thing answering to the significancy of the titles they receive. But the Lord did not, in the holy scriptures, apply names in this way, without truth or propriety. The title of "Sweet Psalmist of Israel," applied to David, as an inspired writer, was appropriate; and signified the important capacity in which he acted, the excellency of the psalms he composed, and the highly favored community for whose use and benefit they were prepared. It was his peculiar office and work to provide, under the immediate direction of God, suitable psalms for the Israel of God, the *church*. "The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my mouth." In his speaking by the Spirit, he stood by divine appointment in the relation of psalmist to the whole church. For the term "Israel," describing those for whom the psalmody of David was designed, did not have respect to the posterity of Jacob as a *nation*: and though it comprehended them, as they constituted the visible church till the wall of partition was broken down, yet its meaning extended farther, to the church in all succeeding ages, in the same latitude of meaning which the term "Israel" has in Psalm 22.3, "O, thou that inhabitest the *praises of Israel*;" and in Gal. 6.16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon *the Israel of God*." As the office and ministry of the Psalmist concern-

ed the whole church, the conclusion is unavoidable, that there is a moral obligation resting permanently on all the church, to use his psalms in religious worship—psalms which have every commendation combined in their behalf, in our being made sure that they were given by inspiration of God, which secured to them every needed excellency, and perfect, unfading fitness for the sacred end for which they were given.

We should be careful in this matter, lest we be found under the guilt of limiting the Holy One of Israel, by setting bounds, which he hath not set, to his Israel, and to his ordinances for Israel; or by confining to Mount Sinai, what the Lord prepared for Mount Zion, and for the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all. The special ministry of Moses, in the Sinai transactions, was distinct and different from that of the Psalmist, and also of the Prophets. The law given by Moses, formed a cloud of ceremonies, which continued until it was done away in Christ. While the ceremonial law was in force, its authority would, of course, be owned, and the observance of its institutions would be inculcated by those holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. As they successively arose after Moses, they found that law in existence, and the service and worship, which it required, established. They had no liberty to contradict it or disregard it: and, in speaking of good things to come; they would naturally speak in the language of the Levitical law, for that was the grand medium then ordained, by which a knowledge of the promised Christ was imparted to men. That law, as a cloud of types and ceremonies, thus cast its shadow on the psalms, and on the prophecies. But the shadow passed away from them, when the cloud itself was done away in Christ. The abrogation of the ritual law, did not take away even from Moses his authority as a prophet and historian. It did not alter the relation in which the Psalmist and other prophets stood to the church. Any objections to the continued use of the inspired Psalms, founded on the allusions they contain to the ceremonial law—any objection of this nature, to the ancient Psalmist being the Psalmist of the New Testament church, if well founded, would stand equally strong against his being of authority now, in his prophetic character; it would set aside the writings of all the prophets, as not fit for a place in the rule of faith now binding on the church, for they all recognized the obligations of the whole ritual law, in the day in which they lived; and they made frequent mention of duties and

privileges, in connexion with persons, places, times and things, which are no longer sacred or typical. Indeed, the false reasoning sometimes employed against the Psalms, would, if carried out, exclude every thing there was under the Old Testament from a place under the New Testament, and would leave, of "the olive tree," in which Gentile believers are engrafted, neither fatness nor "root" remaining.

We think it will come into the mind of every one, who attentively considers this official name of David in the place where it occurs, that his being inspired is inseparably connected with his being the Psalmist of Israel. He was a prophet, and, in common with the other prophets, "ministered unto us." 1 Peter 1.12. But he was distinguished from other prophets, in his being the Psalmist of Israel; or in his being fully authorized and qualified to indite sacred songs for the worshippers of God. His writings, as *prophecies*, must always retain their character and place as prophecies, and the same writings, as *Psalms*, must always retain their character and place as Psalms. We have no more liberty to lay them aside as Psalms, than we have to lay them aside as prophecies. In either aspect of them, their disuse is equally and wholly unwarrantable. The inspired David is despoiled of his office; he is not in fact or in any way the *Psalmist* of Israel, among those who allow human hymns to supplant his. He is not, in their estimation, the *sweet* Psalmist, when they prefer human compositions to his holy and perfect odes.

V. The Psalms, contained in the canonical or scripture psalm book, were sung in divine worship under the Old Testament dispensation. They were thus sung, during the days of David, in the daily service of the tabernacle. 1 Chron. 16.4. 7.23—30. At the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, the Levites praised God in the words of the 136th Psalm, saying, "For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever;" a psalm well adapted to that august and solemn occasion. It is recorded of Hezekiah, that, in restoring the worship of God, from which there was a great declension in the reign of Ahaz, "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done." 2 Chron. 29.2. "And he set the Levites in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, the kings seer, and Nathan, the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord, by his prophets." v. 25. "And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began." v. 27. "And moreover, Hez-

ekiah, the king, and the princes, commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph, the seer; and they sang praises with gladness, and bowed their heads, and worshipped." v. 30. It continued to be the duty of the Levites to superintend that part of public worship in the temple; "to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David, the man of God." Neh. 12.24. The order, established by David by the direction of God, assigning that particular work to the Levites, was in accordance with the original consecration of that tribe to the service of the sanctuary. The appointments made by him in this matter, merely carried out the design and law of the separation of the Levites from the other tribes. When that law expired, the duties and privileges of the Levites, founded on that law, ceased with it. Their agency and superintendence in conducting the worship of God, in which the psalms were used by being sung to his praise, ceased; but it does not follow from this, that the psalms were no longer to be used for the same end.

The regulations and mode according to which that part of public worship was conducted, and particularly the employment of rich and varied instrumental music, in connexion with vocal praise, was suited to that economy of outward and impressive display, and was in unison with the splendid ritual instituted at Sinai, and judged by the Lord to be the best for that state of the church. When the Mosaic law ended, all that was rooted in it, or that branched from it, came to an end. Instrumental music is, therefore, no longer warranted, congruous, or useful, nor, such as David introduced, practicable. But it does not follow that, because the psalms were anciently used in the temple service, in a mode no longer commanded, that, therefore, the psalms are not to be used at all in any way, as songs of praise to the Lord. Many moral duties, of perpetual obligation, were, under the law, performed in a ceremonial way. The whole worship of God was maintained in a ceremonial way. But because that way, once lawful, is now unlawful; does it follow, that those duties are not now obligatory, or that God is not to be worshipped? So the psalms were anciently sung in the ceremonial way; but does it follow, because that way of singing them is abolished, that, therefore, the psalms cannot, and should not, be sung to the praise of God in any way? By no means. Such a conclusion cannot with justice be drawn. The discontinuance of instrumental music does not invalidate the

claims of the inspired psalms to perpetual use in the church. These remarks may suffice to answer an objection taken from the old musical instruments, and may convince those who bring it forward, that there is neither sense nor religion in their harping on the harps of David, against the Psalms which he spake by the Holy Ghost. Many, the most noisy who make this objection, are chargeable with insincerity in argument, or with inconsistency in practice, while they approve the use of instrumental music, in worship, and advocate it on the ground of ancient example, and at the same time reject the scripture Psalms. They cannot defend themselves against the charge of open inconsistency, without convicting themselves of insincerity; for, in practice, they allow that there is no abiding connexion between instruments of music and the inspired psalms; and there is, in reality, none. So that their great error consists in their bringing into the church what they should have left out; and in their leaving out, what they should bring in and keep in.

That the singing of the psalms in religious praise, was not restricted to the temple, or to selected singers; that those songs of the Lord were the common property of his people, and were in general use among them in their own land, appears from the plaintive and pathetic words of the 137th Psalm. The captive Israelites, in the religious meetings they held in retired places by the rivers of Babylon, met under circumstances too humiliating and sorrowful for the sounds of rejoicing, with which their lips and their hearts had been familiar in their sacred assemblies, in their own distant and now desolate land. They hung their harps on the willows. Their reason for so doing, was not any prohibition, making the use of the sacred songs by them unlawful, but the low state of Zion, and their own multiplied afflictions rendering it unseemly and untimely. Their hearts were too sad, to sing in a strange land as they were wont to sing in their own holy land, and too much sanctified by the afflictions they suffered, to profane the songs of the Lord for the gratification of their profane and scornful masters.

That the canonical book of Psalms was in approved use in the church for many ages, is a fact which should be allowed to have its full weight in the minds of all. We have no evidence that other than inspired compositions were ever used in the church, or that other than those contained in the book of Psalms were statedly used during a long period preceding, and reaching down to the close of divine revelation. The

church, under the Old Testament, was under the same obligations to worship God, by singing to his praise; that the church now is; and when any one undertakes to prove that devotional singing is a stated and indispensable part of divine worship, he will adduce those commands which enjoined this duty on them who then lived. Not only was this duty obligatory, but they also possessed a collection of sacred poems, received from the hand of God, for their use and aid in attending to that part of worship, and they certainly did use it for that purpose. Their doing so was not will-worship. They must have had a sufficient warrant from divine appointment for what they did, for they were accepted in it. Even if we could find no express and positive command, directing and restricting the worshippers of God, at that time, to the scripture psalms, we may, from his approbation of the practice, conclude that the singing of those psalms was required by divine institution, in the same way that we prove the transfer of the Sabbath to the first day of the week—from apostolic example and precedent; and also the divine institution of sacrifices—from the approved practice of the early worshippers of God.

There was, therefore, *as to what should be sung in devotion*, an ordinance founded on divine authority, and binding on the whole visible church. What *was* in this respect *is now*. Where that holy ordinance stood in by-gone ages, it yet stands. It is still in force. Its beauty has not faded away. Its rich fulness, it still retains. Necessity for it continues. What it *once* required, it requires *now*. The firm foundation of it in the authority of God, remains and reaches wherever the church exists, or the Bible speaks; and the obligation it imposes is of equal perpetuity, and of equal extent. This ordinance had no principle of decay in it, that it should die of itself—nothing in it, that it should expire by its own limitation—no dependance on other ordinances, of a temporary nature, that it should cease, when they ceased. It reached its perfection long after the Jewish ritual was set up, and it retains its perfection and office, unaffected by the passing away of that ritual. The passing away of the shadows, clears the face of the psalms and reveals the brightness of their meaning. The fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Christ, with which that book abounds, adds a new, enduring—and, shall we not say, endearing lustre to its value, as a seal to confirm its truth, and a key to unlock its treasures.

VI. There was an express command repeatedly given to

worship God by singing the inspired compositions contained in the Book of Psalms. We hope our readers will patiently follow us, that they may see the ground on which this affirmation is made.

Let us turn to the book itself, in which we will meet, not only with general directions to make praise a part of worship, but also with directions that are special and restrictive with respect to what should be used in offering praise to God. "Sing aloud unto God—take a psalm," Ps. 81.2., not *make* it, but take it up in your lips, in offering to God, the sacrifice of praise, "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms," Ps. 95.2. It is necessary here to inquire, What is a psalm? We shall not give the various and sometimes vague opinions of learned men, on this point; nor do we speak of *Mismor*, *Psalm*, occurring in the titles of some of the psalms and no where else. But what is the meaning of *Zimra*, found in the body of the psalms and in other parts of scripture, and in the above passages correctly translated "psalm?" As the result of a careful examination, we will venture to state, that this word denotes a choice poetic composure, given by inspiration of God to be sung with the voice in celebrating his praise. It denotes no other kind of poetry than that, which God made, which he adapted to his praise and made perfect. This word is not exactly synonymous with *shir* song, nor are the two words used interchangeably; although the distinction between them is not well preserved in our translation. *Shir* has a great latitude of signification. It is applied to common songs, "And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease." Ezek. 26.13. "So is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart," Prov. 25.20; it is applied to foolish songs, "than for a man to hear the songs of fools," Eccl. 7.5; and it is applied to lascivious songs sung with attractive music, "Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot, make sweet melody, sing many songs." Isa. 23.16. In such cases, standing in such connection and bearing such meaning, *Zimra* is never found. It is applied only to *sacred* poetry, to the songs of the Lord. If we may, as we should, judge from the manner in which this word is used by the inspired writers, it is evident that they attached a peculiar and sacred meaning to it, and always carefully reserved it for and assigned it to a very holy place in their writings. Thus it is used in reference to the Lord by Moses, "The Lord is my strength and psalm;" Ex. 15.2; the author of my strength and psalm. So also by David, Ps. 118.

14, and Isa. ch. 12.2, in uttering a prophecy, which has respect to New Testament times, and in which converts from among the Jews are called upon to celebrate the praises of the Lord. "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and *psalm*," as it should be rendered instead of "song." This word is thus used, because it is the distinctive and appropriate name of those divine poems which God ordained for his praise. It does not accordingly occur in passages like the following, "And now am I their song," Job 30.9: "I was the song of the drunkards," Ps. 69.12: "I was their song all the day," Lam. 3.14: "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument," Ezek. 33.32. In the latter passage, the song, and the music both vocal and instrumental, are spoken of in high terms of commendation; we would therefore naturally expect to find in it the word we are examining, if it were only a stronger term than *shir*, or merely expressive of the melody of music. The truth is, what was called a psalm was so called, not from any connection it might have, when used, with instrumental music; but from properties essentially and inherently belonging to it, irrespective of music. The peculiar meaning of the word was given to it in very early times, when the science of music was among the Hebrews comparatively in an imperfect state. In the phraseology descriptive of the improvements, which David afterward made in this science, and which he introduced into the worship of God, this word is not found. The service which he appointed was the "service of song," 1 Chron. 6.31; and the instruments he invented are every where called "instruments of song," or as it is in the translation, of "music." Where Hezekiah speaks of singing sacred odes in public worship in connexion with instrumental music, this word does not occur; Isa. 38.20. We conclude, therefore, that what was called a psalm had the cause of its name inalienably in itself, given to it by its divine Author; and that the propriety of its being so named was independent of any thing of a temporary nature in the mode in which psalms were used under the Old Testament.

This name, *zimra*, psalm is applied to no other composure than that, which received its fitness for praise, its poetic structure, its contents, and hence its excellency and authority immediately from divine inspiration. In addition to the passages already brought to prove this, consult the following: "None saith, Where is God my maker who giveth psalms in the night?" Job 35.10. In the early days in which Job lived,

this name was appropriated to the sacred poetry, which God gave for devotion, as he gave visions imparting instruction, in the night season. "Thy statutes are my psalms," or, literally, Psalms are to me thy statutes in the house of my pilgrimage; Ps. 119.54. It would be looking away from the text and context, to suppose that David is here speaking of his making psalms, as if he meant that he had made the statutes of the Lord his subject in the composition of his psalms. He had not been left to his own option in this matter. His psalms form an important part of what, the Apostle says, "came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Having this high origin, the devout David might well affirm of them, they are to me thy statutes. God speaks in his statutes; so he does in the Psalms. His holy and awful authority is in his statutes; so it is in the Psalms. They are ordained of God; they are a part of the rule of life; they are binding on the conscience. This is a property which belongs to psalms, and which they possess in virtue of being inspired. It can never belong to a human poem, and consequently no such poem can be a *psalm*, or can with propriety, according to the true and scriptural import of the word, be so called.

When all the fruits of plenary inspiration in the case of David, are spoken of, or when his poems are with high commendation ascribed to the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost, they are all denominated Psalms. "The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist," or (as it is in the original) and "*pleasant in psalms* for Israel," hath said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." 2 Sam. 23.1. The Spirit spake by him in psalms, and dictated, not only the sentiments contained in them, but the very language in which those sentiments were expressed. "His word was in my tongue." The words, which the psalmist indited, were not his own, but were the words of Christ, the Lord speaking in him by the Spirit. The psalms were therefore entirely inspired. This was essential to their being *psalms*. This imparted to them the holy beauty, the delightful excellence, the spiritual, savory sweetness which is attributed to them. Whatever lacks inspiration, whatever is not the word of Christ, is no psalm: although it does not follow that whatever is truly and properly the word of Christ is a psalm. All prophecy is holy scripture, but all scripture is not prophecy. It may be asked, How are we to know, what parts of the divine word we are to account psalms? We need

be at no loss in this respect, for they were kept by themselves. There was a collection of them into one book, once made by divine direction, and He, who has understanding in all things and dominion over all things, in the hearing of all his church to the latest ages, named that book "*the Book of Psalms.*" We should therewith be content.

In so many places is this word used, having uniformly one specific meaning which shines clearly in it and around it when it is found. What is thus settled cannot be unsettled or obscured, even if one or two passages should be found, in which the word may seem to bear a somewhat different sense, as it may seem to have in the following—the only one we know of. "Take away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Amos 5.23. The word is here rendered "melody;" but to the best of our knowledge it never signifies the mere melody of music; nor the music of viols, which is spoken of in other terms, Isa. 14.11. Besides, a reason is brought in the latter clause, for what was required in the first clause of the verse. "Take away from me for I will not hear." They were forbidden to present, what, on account of their wickedness, he would not accept. What they were to take away from him, was the very thing which he would not hear. There must then be in the latter clause something answerable to the noise of songs in the first. What was it? Not the mere melody of musical sounds from instruments. There must, in connexion with those sounds, have been the utterance of words in singing; nor, is this left to be understood as a thing implied, but is expressed, and expressed in a word which brought to their view that part of worship in its most sacred aspect, reminding them of the sacred nature and import of their songs. The word here evidently means psalms, or at least the service or exercise of singing psalms in connection with instrumental music, "Even the psalmody of thy viols I will not hear." When this word follows another denoting song or thanksgiving, it follows it in the same explanatory relation in which the correspondent verb of the one, follows the correspondent verb of the other, limiting, and as it were consecrating its meaning to God and to his praise. It is thus used in Isa. 51.3; where, instead of denoting melodious music, it has its usual meaning, as the same phrase is translated in Ps. 98.5, "the voice of a psalm."

Whoever examines the foregoing passages will perceive, that the word, translated psalm, denotes, in the use made of

it by the sacred Penman, an inspired composure adapted to praise. Hence composures of this kind, comprised in one book of scripture were called with the strictest propriety the Psalms. They all came under the general appellation of songs, as they were to be sung. But that name had nothing in itself to discriminate them from other songs, and something appropriate was needed and added to render it distinctive. They were called accordingly, "Songs of the Lord," 1 Chron. 25. 7, "Songs of Zion," Ps. 127. 4, "Songs of praise," Neh. 12. 46, "Songs of the Temple," Amos. 8.3. They had, however, a name of their own, *psalms*, a name proper and appropriated expressly and exclusively to them.

There is proof, in the scripture, of its being the will of God that psalms only should be sung in his worship. To the general command, "Sing aloud unto God," this special direction is added, as to what should be sung, "Take a psalm." So when we are required to "come before his presence with thanksgiving," the way in which that is to be done is presented, "and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

Again, sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp and the voice of a psalm. Psalm 98.5. The word translated "*sing*," and in the verse before, "*sing* praise," means *to sing psalms*; or, as it is here explained, *to exercise "the voice" in singing the words "of a psalm."* It is thus translated, "Sing unto him, sing psalms." Ps. 105.2. 1 Chron. 16.9. The two verbs in this verse, *Shor*, in the former clause, from which comes *Shir*, song; and *Zamar*, in the latter clause, from which comes *Zimra*, psalm, are not synonymous, that is, they have not such a sameness of meaning that, when one is used by the sacred writers, the other might be used with the same propriety. The latter has a definite and sacred meaning, which does not belong to the former. This is evinced in the manner in which the two words are used. For,

1. *Shor* is applied to common singing, but *Zamar* never is.
2. The former is applied to the singing of human compositions, the latter always and only to what is inspired.
3. The former is applied to the praising of men, the latter only to the celebrating of the praises of God.
4. The former, and other general terms of like import, occur in such passages as the following: "Sing, O Heavens, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein." Isa. 44.23. "Then shall the trees of the wood sing out." 1 Chron. 16.33. "The vallies also sing." Psalm 65.13. "Praise ye him sun and moon, O praise him, all ye

stars of light." Ps. 148.3. The latter is never so used. It is always addressed to, or affirmed of *men*, as *the agents of the action it expressed*; and of an action, appropriate *only* to men.

This word has then a meaning peculiar to itself, and occupies a place in the language which no other word could fill up. When subjoined to *Shor*, it is not for repeating the same idea, but for the purpose of defining the sense in which the former word should be taken. *Shor*, to sing, standing by itself, would suggest the idea of singing songs, but without the aid of some explanatory expression would not determine any thing about the nature or object of the songs; but *Zamar*, to sing psalms, would present the one idea of singing inspired compositions to the praise of God: and, having this specific import, it is subjoined in many cases to the former and to other general terms indicative of praise, to restrict and illustrate their meaning and to show how they are to be understood when used in reference to divine praise. What God hath thus joined together, let no man part asunder, in scripture interpretation, or in practice. Persons may argue, that they admit that there was a command to sing psalms, but they will say, "we are not to be confined by that command, when there are other general commands, expressed in terms which allow us greater latitude." To this we answer, that all commands, having respect to the same duty, should be taken together, as the connected sections of one law; and when one part of a law requires us to sing psalms, it is going too far to plead that another part allows *not to do* it. Besides all general commands, on this subject, are rendered particular and limited, in their having annexed to them a command of specific and definite import. This is done so frequently, that it may be laid down as an established rule, that no interpretation of those general terms should be framed; no inference from them drawn, without regard had to the limitation put upon them, and the clear illustration thus shed upon them by the sacred writers, whose common practice it is to use *Zamar* in a connexion in which it answers this purpose. In addition to the instances of this already given, we will adduce others, in which we will still give the word the translation which its distinctive meaning requires:

Sing unto God, sing psalms to his name. Ps. 68.4.

Sing unto God ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing psalms unto the Lord. Verse 32.

I will sing, yea, I will sing psalms unto the Lord. Ps. 27.6.

So will we sing, and sing psalms of thy power. Ps. 21.13.

My heart is fixed ; I will sing, and I will sing psalms. Ps. 57.7: 108.1.

I will sing a new song unto thee O God ; upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing psalms unto thee. Ps. 144.9.

I, even I, will sing unto the Lord ; I will sing a psalm to the Lord God of Israel. Judges 5.3. This last passage proves, that this mode of expression was in vogue in very early times ; and did not, of course, take its rise or its propriety from any thing in the mode in which this part of worship was conducted, agreeably to the regulations first made by David.

In the above passages, in the first clause of each, *Shor* is used. Standing by itself, this word has a comprehensive import, and is common and applicable to all kinds of singing ; but when it is employed to signify devotional singing, it is separated from a common to a holy use, and its meaning is restricted to the singing of psalms, by the annexed explanatory word, *Zamar*, which is also subjoined, in the same relation and for the same purpose, to other general terms expressive of praise, as in the following passages :

"I will praise thee with my whole heart ; before the gods will I sing psalms unto thee." Ps. 138.1.

"Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and will sing psalms unto thy name." Ps. 18.49.

"I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and will sing psalms to the name of the Lord most high." Psalm 7.17.

"I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people. I will sing psalms to thee among the nations." Ps. 57.9.

"Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live I will praise the Lord ; I will sing psalms to my God while I have being." Psalm 146.2.

"It is good to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing psalms to thy name, O Most High." Ps. 92.1.

"Praise ye the Lord ; for it is good to sing psalms ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." Ps. 147.1.

Other passages of similar construction with the foregoing, might be cited. But these are enough to make it manifest that the word, in this connection, determines what would otherwise be matter only of inference, and expresses what would otherwise be only implied. For instance, in that expression, "I will sing," there is nothing expressed as to what

or to whom he would sing ; but both these things are made plain, when it is added, "I will sing psalms." Again, when it is said, "While I live, I will praise the Lord," it may be argued on other sure grounds, that hymns or praises, written by holy men for that purpose, are intended ; but when it is added, "I will sing psalms to my God while I have being," there is no longer any occasion for argument, or room for doubt.

Let us pause and consider these things. We have seen, that all inspired composures, fitted to praise, are denominated psalms, a name appropriated to them, exclusive of all else. We have seen that there is a command to sing them—a command expressed in definite terms, which is never applied to the singing of any thing else. We have seen, moreover, that it is a common usage with the sacred writers, when treating of the ordinance of praise, in terms which have, in their ordinary acceptation, or separately by themselves, a general signification, to connect with such terms another, explanatory of the sense in which they are to be taken, and signifying to sing psalms.

From all this, it is evident that there is an express command to sing inspired compositions exclusively. They all come under the general designation of songs ; but as the songs of the Lord were superior to all other songs, so they had a distinctive name, expressive of that superiority, and applied to no other songs. A Hebrew, in the exercise of his natural talents, might compose a moral or religious poem, and call it, with propriety, a song, as those composed by Solomon are called ; but though it should contain nothing but truth and piety, it would not be a psalm. What a prophet or seer composed for praise, by impulse or direction of the Holy Spirit, would be a song, a spiritual song ; but it would also be a psalm, and the singing of it would be in conformity to the command "to sing psalms."

Those who lived under the Old Testament and during the personal ministry of Christ, could be at no loss in determining what they were required to sing to the praise of God. What they had the means of knowing, we may know, having the same means of information, in what was written aforetime for our instruction : and what was binding on them is also binding on us, unless it can be shown that what the Lord ordained for the church in days of old, touching this matter, is no longer in force on us. This, however, is not to be taken for granted : nor does it follow that this ordinance

ceased, as to its authority or fitness, with the cessation of the Mosaic economy, because it had its rise and institution under that economy, or because the commands and testimonies in favor of this ordinance are contained in the Old Testament.

When the advocates of human hymns are directed to the strong and accumulated evidence that proves psalm-singing to have been a divine ordinance under the Old Testament, and are called upon to adduce any evidence, which they may affirm exists, that that ordinance has been altered or abrogated, or to show cause, if any there be, why it should not now be obeyed, they find on trial that they cannot do this. They are, consequently, constrained to make a partial concession, amounting in words to something, but amounting to very little, in view of the grounds on which they place their concession, and the practice they connect with it. The concession is this, that the church, under the New Testament, has a right to retain the psalms of scripture, and authority to use them in religious worship. Well, then, *this authority*—is it from heaven? or, Of men? Answer this. Some, that may think themselves to be great reasoners, may reason with themselves, saying, If we shall say, “From heaven,” it may be asked, Why, then, do ye not sing them, whenever and wherever ye sing praise? Why do ye sing what has not the same authority of God upon it? Others, placed in circumstances of perplexity, affecting, if not their private sentiments, their public utterance, may reason from a principle and to a result the same with that of the chief priests respecting the baptism of John, “But if we shall say, Of men; They feared the people, for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.” It is a poor way for men to dispose of a question of great practical importance in the worship of God, by saying, “We cannot tell.” Has the church a right to sing the scripture psalms? The right must be either from heaven or of men. If we have the authority of the Most High God to sing them, can we be authorized in this way *to do*, what we at the same time *may neglect to do* and be blameless? Can we, in singing the psalms, say, in truth, that we have the warrant of heavenly authority for it; and yet not slight that authority nor defile our conscience, by omitting to sing them, or by singing something else whenever it suits our convenience or taste? Is the authority of God of such a weak, neutral and variable nature, that it can be made to sanction any thing? The word of Christ is not, yea and nay. A warrant by divine appointment to do any thing, is connect-

ed with a moral obligation to do it, leaving us no liberty of conscience to do otherwise. If any one say, "we may sing the psalms of scripture, as we are allowed now to sing any thing we please, provided we sing nothing untrue or immoral;" in that case, so far as the singing of the psalms is concerned, the authority of God would, in reality have nothing to do in the matter: whether they shall, or shall not be sung, is then a question *not decided already* by the will of God, but to be decided by man's will; and the singing of them, at any time, is "Of man." But how is it ascertained that this important matter is left to the determination of men? Is there a grant of this discretionary power made in the Bible? If not, then it is usurped, with jeopardy to the interests of God's glory. Is it not exceedingly important that nothing false in principle, or immoral in its tendency, be introduced into the praises of his church? What can effectually guard against this? Is it any thing in man, or to be done by man of his own accord? Or is it what the Lord hath done and ordained, in providing, by inspiration, Psalms in his word for his whole church in all ages? Some persons honestly think that the old psalms were very good in their day, as good as could be expected, and that, as it is proper to show them respect, being in the Bible, we must do the best we can with them; and then to make up for their deficiencies, add to them something better. Ask them, when they are priding themselves on their "admirable collection of psalms and hymns," Is all this of heaven or men? and they will candidly say, that they do not know that it makes much difference, whether it is from heaven or of men; they are not particular about that; great men have had this opinion, who would, of course, know if there was any thing wrong in it. That sinful security, which has been so often the forerunner of great defections in the church, generally begins with an undue reliance on mere men. Those who, without further inquiry or knowledge, rest their opinions, or quiet their consciences on what men have said or done, are giving a dangerous weight to the authority of human traditions; and if tradition be exalted to a place in the rule of faith and practice, in exclusion of, or into equality with the word of God, it will make little difference as to the sin of it in his sight, and the hurt of it to the sinning, whether the elders be dead or living, popish or protestant. The words of Christ suit all such cases: "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."

Some may come forth boldly, and say, we ought not now to be restricted to the Book of Psalms. Why not? The Jews only were restricted to that book. How so? Can the *obligation*, springing from the will of God, to sing those psalms remain, and yet its *strictness*, which excluded all else from his praise, be taken away by the hand of any one whose pleasure it may be to judge it too strict? Do you strike still deeper, and affirm that the obligation itself was cancelled, when the ceremonial law ceased? That is what no man has yet been able to prove. The great duty of praising God was not ceremonial—it is essentially moral. Neither is the necessary provision which God made for the orderly and acceptable performance of the duty ceremonial, local, or national. It was a permanent provision for a perpetual duty, both ordained to go together, fitly and inseparably united, unto all places and ages of the world. But if singing the psalms were a usage purely Jewish, and so entirely abolished, that we would be no more bound by it than we are by the law of sacrifices, then, on that supposition, what right would we have to sing them at all, or to sing imitations of them, any more than we have to observe holy days and feasts, in imitation of ceremonial days and feasts?

We have thus endeavored to set forth, in the truth and power of abundant proof from the Bible, that there was for many ages in the church, an ordinance which directed and restricted the worshippers of the true God to sing to his praise the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms. Was that holy institution ever abrogated or altered? Were the commands which guarded and honored it ever revoked? We shall proceed to prove that they were not, and that, consequently, this ordinance stands in its full force and primitive strictness, unaltered by any thing that took place at or after the coming of Christ into the world.

I. Its continuance is recognized in commands given in the New Testament.

“Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.” James 5.13. There is but one word in the command, *ψαλλετω*, answering to Zamar, and adequately translated, sing psalms. This, it is to be observed, was addressed to the dispersed tribes of Israel, enjoining on them a duty with which they had always been familiar, and which remained incumbent on them under the new dispensation. In their sacred scriptures they had the Psalms, in which also the same duty was inculcated, and this duty could not be inculcated in the language in which

the apostle wrote, in terms more appropriate than what he employed. Summary and general as the command may seem, it would at once bring to the mind of an Hebrew what was intended, and would not suggest any thing else. Wherever they dwelt in their dispersion, in their having the sacred books of the Old Testament, they had the means of attending to this duty.

We shall examine more largely another command, which is often appealed to by persons who show that they know very little of its true meaning: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord." Col. 3.16. Among those who put contrary constructions on this passage, in its reference to psalmody, there is an agreement in two things.

1. That, by the word of Christ, the Holy Scripture is meant.

2. That "the word of Christ" is, *in some sense*, comprehensive of "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs."

The main point of difference, regards the sense in which the word of Christ is comprehensive of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; and this is the main point to be determined. One of two things must be true, either the word of Christ contains the very psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs intended, or it contains only the subject of them. The former view would seem the most easy and natural, inasmuch as there were well known parts of the Sacred Scriptures which had the name and nature of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and which, by divine appointment, had long been in use in singing the praises of God. Still there are those who, in opposition to this, will insist that nothing else is intended, than that the word of Christ contains the subject of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, although they can produce none that were made, nor prove that any such were known of, in the apostles' days. This view represents that this passage requires no more, and determines no more than that the subjects treated of in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, be drawn from the Sacred Scriptures; and that, consequently, there is full warrant here furnished for composing them, and being composed, for singing them. Any one may perceive that this view is *brought* to the text, not *taken from* it; for it does not touch the text until it reaches it, step by step, in a conclusion, from premises which it, in the first place, assumes. The text

speaks, not of *making* psalms and hymns, or of their *subject*, but of "*singing*" them. If this command had been enjoined on the Israelites of old, would it ever have entered into their heads, that this command conferred authority, or created any necessity, for them all or for any of them, to make psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, when they were only commanded to *sing*; and the word of God amply furnished them with what they were directed to sing? Let us see how this interpretation will stand, being tested by the passage it pretends to explain. Are all persons who are under the great duty of letting the word of Christ dwell in them, also required to teach and admonish one another in religious poetry—each one to present instructions and admonitions, when occasion required, in the form of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs? Few would have capacity to teach in this way. As a general thing, it would be impracticable. Well, then, the few must compose the psalms, hymns and songs for the many. Be it so. The above interpretation can have no other way to work in practice. But we seriously ask, can it work in this way without interfering with the claims and place of Christ's word itself? Would it not be exalting the writings of men to undue authority, to draw our instructions and admonitions from human hymn books? Would not this be using them in a way calculated to cast the holy word into the shade and back-ground? Instead of using *uninspired* compositions, as a means of teaching and admonishing, would it not be every way better to use the word itself for this end, and to bring its light and authority to bear directly on the understandings and consciences of those we would teach, rebuke, or warn?

The above interpretation, which makes the psalms, hymns and songs to be poetry, composed by uninspired men, is liable to two special and weighty objections, grounded on the meaning it attaches to "psalms." These objections are:

1. That the word psalm, in scripture phraseology, is never applied to uninspired poetry; and,
2. That, if the psalms here intended are composed by uninspired men, then the genuine Psalms of Scripture are not specified in this passage, and are not particularly mentioned any more than the book of Genesis. Now can an interpretation, which charges such an omission on this text, be sound? What! not mention the inspired psalms at all? No: and besides, those who, if this interpretation were true, would have the privilege of making psalms, are not required to found

them on or form them after the inspired psalms, any more than in making hymns and spiritual songs to confine themselves to inspired hymns and songs. But, in making the former, as the latter, they have the whole word of Christ before them, and may make a psalm from the Book of Psalms, or the Book of Job, or any other part just as they may choose; only one limit is set round about them—only one restriction is put on them—the subject must have a scriptural origin. Do not think, reader, that we are spending too much time in pointing out the flaws, of which this interpretation is full in every part of it. You know what a vast and imposing fabric has been reared in the church by man, having its whole foundation in the meaning put on this and a parallel passage. If the foundation be weak, we should know it; if it be very weak, “wood, hay and stubble,” we should not build thereon, nor value as sacred what others have built on it. Let us then take another look at it. You will agree with me, that one of two things must be true; either the psalms in this passage are the very psalms contained in scripture, or psalms composed by uninspired men. The latter they cannot be, for reasons already given. Then the scripture psalms alone are meant. The main point is now settled so that it cannot be shaken. The obscuring clouds of a false interpretation are cleared away, and we can see where we are, and where we should be willing always to remain, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms of holy scripture, singing unto the Lord. The Lord would have us, in psalms, as in all other things, to give the preference to what is his own, and we do not believe his faithful Apostle would throw any obstacle in the way of our doing so. Do you think Paul would recommend you to give up the holy poetry that came from heaven, for that which comes from man? Others may do so. Even a christian poet may come with his fine pious poems, and urge you to sing them before the throne of God. But try him and his poems by the word of God, in the following manner:

Reader. What book is this which you recommend me to use in praising God?

Poet. It is my book of Psalms and Hymns.

R. Why do you call any of them psalms?

P. Because I composed them in imitation of the psalms in the Bible.

R. But you ought to be sure that you have a good right to call, what you have written, *psalms*.

P. I am quite sure of that, for we are required to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs ; which proves that we may compose psalms, as clearly as it proves that we may compose hymns.

R. But I see that you have not made your psalms on any other part of the Word of Christ than the Book of Psalms. Now I have always thought, since I knew any thing of what inspiration meant, that the inspired psalms are as good and complete psalms as they can be made, being made by Him than whom none can make a better. Why, then, do you not let them alone, and make psalms, if you are authorized to do so, on some other parts of the Bible which are not psalms already? Why do you confine yourself to the Book of Psalms?

P. Well! the reason of that is, that psalms are particularly mentioned by the Apostle.

R. So they are. But what psalms?

P. Why, the psalms contained in the Holy Scriptures.

R. So I think; and therefore you cannot, by the help of Paul, crowd yours into their place, or with his sanction name them *psalms*. Moreover, this word cannot have in this passage, and in one and the same place in it, two entirely different senses, and have either of them, whenever fancy or theory may choose to leap from one to the other.

What has been said is sufficiently decisive of the sense in which the word of Christ is inclusive of "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs;" and is also equally decisive of the sense in which we are to understand "psalms," in the use we are here directed to make of them in teaching one another, and in praising God. This being determined, it necessarily determines the sense in which the word of Christ is inclusive of hymns and spiritual songs, and also of the sense in which we are to understand hymns and spiritual songs, in the use we are here directed to make of them, in teaching one another and in praising God. The two latter words are closely joined to the former, yea, identified with it under the same circumstances and standing in a common relation with it to the word of Christ, to instruction and admonition, and to praise. Whatever disposal the hand of interpretation makes of the former word, it must go on to make of the others. We are led to the Holy Scriptures for the psalms, and we hear nothing from the lips of our unerring guide, that requires us to look away back to our fellow men for hymns and spiritual songs. How unseemly it would be for the Apostle first to urge us to give open and free house-room in our souls to the word of Christ, holding up distinctly

to our view a beautiful part of it, and directing us how to use it for the good of others and to the praise of God, and then, for him abruptly to fly off, leaving no marks by which we might follow him, fly off, we know not whither, to hymns and songs, without informing us whose they are, and meaning at the same time that they are works of man, and that we should use them in the same way and for the same purpose, that we are to use the psalms of the Lord. No. This is not the manner of the Apostle, nor do we believe this of him, whoever under heaven may say it.

We are therefore directed for hymns and spiritual songs to the scriptures. We will find them where we find the psalms. Some may reply, "we cannot find them there, nor in the Psalm Book which you have recommended so highly." We will explain this. That we may do it more to your satisfaction, we will draw a fit and helpful illustration from your own book, in which there are "Psalms, Hymns," and perhaps in the end, or if not, perhaps in the title page, spiritual songs. These respective names are given to respective parts of the book. Now you know that names are nothing without the things they signify, and are often applied arbitrarily and improperly. So that, in your book, one part may have a name without denoting any thing peculiar to that part different from what there is in the other parts. Let us therefore leave entirely out of view their names, and take the contents of the book. Well, then, are not all these pieces, from the first to the last, spiritual songs in your own understanding of them? Yes, they are spiritual songs. Are they not, also, all of them hymns, from the beginning to the end of the book? The question is not, what are they called? but, what are they? Is not a hymn what is sung in honor of God? They are all hymns, then. Let us go a step further. As to what you call psalms, have they any thing in the mode in which they are constructed—in the subjects of which they treat—in the arrangement of their parts, or in their style of language, to distinguish them from hymns? If they and the hymns were intermixed, would you, from any thing characteristic in the one different from the other, be able to divide them? Would any judge of poetry in the world be able to do it? Can a difference be found where none exists—or a classification be made where there is no difference? Those that are called psalms have nothing internal or inherent to distinguish them from hymns; and therefore the latter might be called psalms with as much propriety as the former. Taking, then, your

collection as it is, aside from the titles given arbitrarily to the parts into which it is divided; judging, according to what must be your own ideas about it, all it contains are spiritual songs, and they are all hymns—and one a psalm as much as another. In truth and manifest propriety, however, there are no true psalms among them, in the sense in which psalm is taken in this passage. To alter a psalm of the Bible from what the Lord made it, by taking from it or adding to it, by transposing or omitting parts, alters it so essentially, that what the hand of man thus makes, is no more a *psalm* than it is *holy scripture*. If a paraphrase or pretended imitation of a psalm is a psalm, then a poetic paraphrase of any other part of the Bible is that part of the Bible. If an imitation of a psalm is not a psalm in reality, it is improper so to call it. We have thus shown that the advocates of human hymns have not adjusted their system, even to what they allege to be the distinct meaning of the different terms employed in this text, and that they never can adjust it to the true meaning of them.

To find a fit place for the application of these terms within the bounds of holy scripture, it is not requisite to find psalms which are not hymns, or hymns distinct from psalms, or spiritual songs distinct from both: for this plain reason, that all psalms are hymns or praises to God, and are songs because sung with the voice, and spiritual in their origin, subject, influence and object. All these terms are applicable to one and the same book, as the scriptures are designated by two terms, each of which is applicable to the whole, “To the *law* and to the *testimony*: if they speak not according to *this word*.” Isa. 8:20. The ancient, authorized Psalter contains what were denominated psalms; all collectively, “the Psalms,” each of them singly, a psalm—all hymns or praises, all songs of the Lord. Being psalms, they must from their nature be hymns and spiritual songs. It is useless to search for any thing in the poetic structure or properties of the Hebrew ode, or song of the Bible, to distinguish it specifically from the inspired hymn; or of the inspired hymn as if it was something different from the psalm. Biblical critics have undertaken to do this, but whoever has found any thing perspicuous and satisfactory in the fruit of their labors in this respect, has found what the writer has not found.

We come confidently to the conclusion, that the word of Christ is comprehensive of the very psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, intended by the Apostle. Having enjoined chris-

tians to apply the word of Christ to themselves, he proceeds to speak of a particular part of it, and to point out two purposes for which they should use it.

1. Toward one another in their social and brotherly relations, "teaching and admonishing one another." The portion of scripture specified is peculiarly devotional and practical, richly abounding with what is instructive and admonitory, in the due improvement of which christians may edify one another. The psalms are a rule to direct us, and a means to help us in doing this. It is not necessary that we should put the matter of our instructions into a poetic form; but it is necessary that we draw it and its enforcement from an authentic source.

2. Toward God, in the relations we stand in to him, "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord;" singing what are truly and properly "psalms," from their inspiration, fitness for praise, excellence and authority;" "hymns," from their use in celebrating the glory of God;" "spiritual songs," songs from their connexion with vocal music; spiritual, given by the Spirit and relating to spiritual things. That is, this part of the word of Christ is fitted to answer both these ends.

We will notice with brevity the other passage. "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Eph. 5.18. The mode of expression in the latter clause occurs very frequently, as we have seen in the Psalms. The word translated "making melody," answers to the Hebrew word, which signifies to sing psalms. We have no single English word to express it. The Spirit here meant is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. To be filled with the Spirit, is to have the Spirit dwelling within us, to be much under his influence, and subject to his guidance and power. The inhabitation of the Spirit takes place, and his influence on the soul is exerted through the medium and by the instrumentality of the word rightly applied. One part of the word is particularly specified, as particularly fitted to awaken, to cherish and to express devotional feelings. That part, to be used aright, for this the end, should be,

1. Meditated upon—"speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," as it is written "commune with," or, as it might be rendered, speak to "your heart." Ps. 4.5.

2. It should be sung thankfully and devoutly, to the praise of God, "singing and singing psalms in your hearts unto the Lord." How far-fetched and forced on, the construction that

has wrested these passages into an approbation of the practice of singing human composure in divine worship, or of making hymns for that end.

II. There are prophecies which can be fulfilled only under the New Testament, and fulfilled only in the continued use of the Psalms.

It is made evident by Isaiah himself, that his prophecy, chap. 12, describes converts from among the Jews under the New Testament. Any person conversant with the Psalms, will perceive that most of the expressions attributed to the converted Jews, the words put into their mouth by the Spirit of prophecy as that which "they shall say in that day," are taken from the Psalms. Besides, it is said, "Sing unto the Lord," ver. 5, that is, sing psalms, which is the true and proper meaning of the word here used, as we assuredly believe, for reasons already given. We cannot, in good conscience, depart from the sacred meaning of this word; but must, in our interpretation of scripture, give it the force and precision which belong to it. Compare this passage with Ps. 105.1, 2.

Examine on this part of our subject Ps. 47, which brought prospectively to view the spread of the gospel and kingdom of Christ among the nations after his triumphant ascension; "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." Then it is added, "Sing psalms to God, sing psalms, sing psalms to our King, sing psalms. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye psalms with understanding." The translators were evidently aware that Zamar was a very emphatic word, and that there would be a vagueness and poverty in the translation, which existed not in the original, if they should simply render it sing; therefore they rendered it "sing praises;" but that did not mend the matter, for that did not reach the strong emphasis and pointed speciality which natively belong to the word, but made it of the same general meaning with *hallal*. Again, it is written, "All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing psalms unto thee; they shall sing psalms unto thy name. Selah." Ps. 66.4. "This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people which shall be created, shall praise, shall praise the Lord." Ps. 162.18. "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." The people to be created, are those created in Christ—begotten again. They shall praise the Lord in what was written in old times. The Book of Psalms has then internal evidence of its being designed for Gentiles as well as Jews. Both are addressed in the same way; Gentiles are

called long before they were in circumstances to hear the call, and are commanded to sing psalms in anticipation of the state into which they would have actual access after the fullness of time; and these calls and commands, now, hundreds of years after they were first issued, are directly to us *the present* calls and commands of God, and we may not slight them with impunity.

The apostle, in proving that it was the design of the ministry of Christ through its confirmation of the promises made to the fathers to provide spiritual blessings for the Gentiles, "that Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy," said, "as it is written, For this cause I will confess," or give thanks, "to thee among the Gentiles, and sing psalms unto thy name." Rom. 15.9. This is cited from Ps. 18.49, and that is taken from 2d Sam. 22d ch. How could it be true, as it primarily was of David, that he would give thanks unto the Lord among the nations in the latter days? How could he attribute to himself the celebration of God's praise so long after he lived, and during a long period of time running through the whole New Testament dispensation? He could affirm this of himself in truth, knowing, as he must have known, the relation in which he stood to the whole church as the inspired author of psalms. When the words he indited, and the psalms he composed by the Holy Spirit, are taken up and sung by the Gentiles in celebrating the praises of God, the prophecy he uttered is literally accomplished. The personal voice of David is not heard; but he speaks officially and ministerially when the converted Gentiles give thanks to God by singing psalms. The voice, as to the sound of it, is the voice of Gentiles; but the words, which make those sounds praise and thanksgiving, are the words of David. "He that was the sweet psalmist of Israel is now the sweet psalmist of the Gentiles. Converting grace makes people greatly in love with David's Psalms." But it may be replied, that David's words refer ultimately and in their main design to Christ. This is no doubt true. David here speaks in his typical character personating Christ; or, Christ by David speaks of his triumph over his foes, of his enthronement in heaven, and of his spiritual kingdom spreading wide in the world. Therefore, it is a psalm sublime and spiritual, which the Gentiles may sing without any violation of the good taste which is recommended from the throne itself. The spirit of Christ spake by David in the Psalms; Christ speaks by his spirit in the Psalms. The Gentile churches therefore speak in praise to the Father by Christ in

the Psalms. In singing psalms, they sing the words of Christ, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him. So that, in this way, what Christ says in addressing the Father is in the fullest sense true, "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee among the heathen and sing psalms unto thy name." He does this in and by his seed, the church, in their singing the words he hath put into their mouth, the Psalms which he spake by his Spirit.

"Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people." Ps. 117. This is a command extending its obligation to all the churches in the world. Rom. 15.11. This is a command of God as much as any one of the ten commandments. And can any one read it as his, in the only Psalm Book God ever gave his church, without feeling that he ought to hold that holy Book in his hand when he sings praise?

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Ps. 22.22. This is applied to the Lord Jesus, by the Apostle in proving, that he is one with his people, and that they are his brethren on the ground of his participation of the same nature with them. Having in his divine person an eternal nature in which he is one with the Father, it was an act of the greatest condescension to assume human nature, and to identify and unite himself thus closely with his church. But this he did: "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren," saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise," or sing hymns "unto thee." Heb. 2.12. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." This is not exclusive of any thing which he did in his prophetic office: still it takes in what he does in his exalted state as a prophet, by his word and Spirit to his brethren in the church, revealing to them the will of God, for their salvation. "In the midst of the church, will I sing praise to thee." This is not exegetical of the former clause. For that shows what he does *to* his brethren in the earth. But this shows that what he does *in the midst* of them to his Father and their Father in heaven. In midst of the church will I sing hymns to thee. How are we to understand this? The psalm is prophetic. How was this fulfilled in Christ? This was indeed personally done by Christ after the institution and celebration of the sacrament which is commemorative of his death, they sang a hymn. Mat. 26.30. In that the prophecy was partially answered. But something of a more public and abiding nature and of more extensive scope, than that act ap-

pears to have been, was evidently intended in the psalm. For in the following verses the Messiah is represented as enjoining on his people the duty of praise, and enforcing it by reasons drawn from his support under and his deliverance from his sufferings; and then adds, "My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation." verse. 25. This is spoken by the Son to the Father. "*My praise*," that of which *I am the author*, "shall be of thee," its *subject*; as he had before said, "I will sing praise to thee," its *object*, "in the midst of the church, in the great congregation," the *agents* and *instruments* under his command in offering this praise. We need not repeat, for further illustration, what we stated above in explaining the parallel passage. What he here engages himself to do, the Lord Jesus does in his threefold office of prophet, priest and king. As a prophet, by his word he provides psalms for praise. As a king, he appoints the ordinance of praise in his church. As a priest, he presents their service and acts of praise for acceptance before the Father. He claims universal and undivided propriety in the praises of his church. "My praise." "I will sing praise to thee." This he does by his church: but, as performed by the church, it is *his*; it is praise in which he, as its author, has an immediate and direct agency. All these prophecies, duly considered, confirm us in the persuasion, that the Old Testament Psalms were designed for the New Testament church.

This argument is strengthened by all that is affirmed in scripture about "the new song:" and those who conjecture that this phrase furnishes any authority for singing human compositions in religious worship have not examined sufficiently into the matter. It is not enough, in order to secure, under a divine warrant, a place for an uninspired hymn in the praises of God, that its author convince us that it is a song, and that it is new. That we may grant. Why, then, not sing it when the scripture speaks of a "new song." The claim set up for its adoption is not founded on its being a *song*—but on the fact of its being *new*. But before its claim on this ground can be owned to be valid and scriptural, it should, and must be made out, that it is new in *the same sense* in which the song in scripture is called new. For it is evident that if it is not new in the same sense, then it cannot find access to the church in that way. We must then inquire what is meant in the scriptures by the new song.

It is mentioned in Rev. 14.3. Expositors generally hold that the hundred and forty-four thousand, with the Lamb,

are the elect of God, called and gathered into the fellowship of Christ, during the 1260 years of the reign of Anti-Christ. They *learned* that new song. It was unknown to all in the earth beside: "And no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand which were redeemed from the earth." The song, however, did not originate from them—it did not *begin* with them. Saved in a period of great peril and trial, kept from apostacy in a time when apostacy was common, powerful and cruel, they hold a conspicuous station, and form a notable, and as it were, distinct, company from the rest of the redeemed, in the scene presented to view in this vision. The salvation of others is wondrous; but theirs is exceedingly so, in the view of heaven, and in their own view, to the special praise of the sovereignty and grace of God: "And they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne and also before the four beasts and the elders." But they did not begin this song, nor did they sing *alone*. They joined in concert with those in heaven: "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters," for compass, "and as great thunder," for loudness, "and the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Those having harps are the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, representatives of the whole church and her ministry, who are always before the throne. Their voice was *first heard* sounding *from heaven*. Having heard this, he goes on to speak in verse 3, of those on the mount; as if the eye of the enraptured seer had not been withdrawn from them, they being prominently set forth in the vision; he goes on, we say, to mention of them, "And they sung a new song," &c. Where can any man find a place in this sublime vision for the song which he may choose to make?

The new song is more fully described in Rev. 5.2. But why is that called new? Was it in contradistinction from the psalms sung by the saints of old—any thing diverse from what they sung? If not, then no argument can be drawn from this in favor of modern hymns. Now we say that the song is not called new to distinguish it from the ancient psalms. For those who lived in ancient times—all the *redeemed under the Old Testament* dispensation—bear a part in singing this new song; "Thou has redeemed us to God out of every nation, &c.. It was not new as if it were *unknown* to Old Testament believers, or *unsung* by them. It is new from the first revelation of grace to the end of time, and even through eternity; it is ever and forever new, from the excellency and

greatness and wonderfulness of its grand subject. It is new, not with respect to the Old Testament church, but in respect to the whole universe, and contrasted with all else that is known and celebrated in earth or heaven; for its subject is redemption, the subject of the new covenant. Hence the angels are devoutly moved by it, and every thing in heaven and earth views it with deep interest and praise. This is the great subject of the Psalms, and in singing them we sing the new song.

From all this, we may form a correct judgment of what was intended by the ancient prophet, "Sing unto the Lord a new song and his praise from the end of the world." Isa. 42.10. There is nothing here asserted of *making* a new song. So far from any thing of this kind being implied, it is strongly implied that the song was *already* made. The subject of this new song is summarily expressed in verse 9, "new things do I declare," and the preceding part of the chapter fully expresses what these new things are. Are those things new, as if first revealed and promised under the New Testament? No. It is not said new things *will* I declare; but "new things *do* I declare; *before* they spring forth I tell you of them." This was spoken in the present time, and from the same point of time the call was issued to the Gentiles, "Sing a new song." When the Gentiles came to hear the Lord speaking to them, they hear new things, but things declared long before, in old promises and predictions. If, when the word of God comes to them, they hear new things in what holy men spake in old time, surely then they may sing of those new things, in a new song, or may sing the new song in singing psalms written in old time, prepared for their use ages before. The Lord spake as if his voice by the living prophet entered into the ears of the Gentiles, "Before they come to pass I tell you of them." So before they came to pass, he said, "Sing a new song;" but when the Gentiles came at length to hear, they might say, "long ago he spake to us of new things, but we did not hear; long ago he spake to us of a new song; but we did not sing. Those things are new to us—that song is new to us. But if, on the one hand, the song to be new, must be *new made*, after the calling and conversion of the Gentiles, and a song not before known; so, on the other hand, the things to be *new*, must be *newly declared*, such as were not before known. If the Gentiles would be warranted by this to make new songs, they would be, on the same ground, warranted to look

for new revelations. If the *things* declared do not lose their newness by the lapse of time, neither does the *song*. The new song, new from its transcendent excellency, its marvellous nature, and unfading freshness, is, in all ages, the song of the people of God in the earth—for the grand and lofty theme of their praise is their redemption by the Son of the living God—a redemption, which not only procures for them, and secures to them benefits which universal nature, with all its richness is too poor to give, but which also unfolds all the attributes of Jehovah into an abiding brightness, into a high and outspreading Shechinah that outshines, and at the same time beautifies the glory of the whole vast creation of God. That great redemption, and the grace of it, and the glory of it, is the chief subject of the Psalms, in singing which, in every age, the new song is sung.

When we turn to the Psalms, we will find that the Old Testament church was no stranger to “the new song.” Whoever examines the connexion where this significant phrase occurs, will be satisfied, that in the Psalms of David, in the prophecies of Isaiah, and in the Revelations of John, the import of the new song is one and the same. It is the song of the whole new creation. It was sung by the church of God while circumscribed to one nation, within limits set by the law of Moses. After the coming, the death and ascension of the Lord of glory, that is the song, new to the whole universe around, which was sung by the same church of God in its state of unrestricted extension among Gentile nations. It is the song of the redeemed in all ages. We read not of new *songs*, as of *many*, but as of *one*, the new song. There is an ordained unity in the church’s praises, and that unity is honored, whenever the ransomed of the Lord are called up in the scriptures to give glory to God, by singing the new song, or whenever they are presented to view as engaged in that sublime service. It is their united and adoring acknowledgement of the grace and glory of God, displayed in their redemption, their high and harmonious praise to God for it. And the Lord their God hath opened a wide and beautiful avenue in the Psalms, leading directly to his throne, for the use of his ransomed in the earth, that they may bring unto him their praises. Into that pure and lovely way, lighted by a constant shining from heaven, we are called, in the Psalms, by the voice of the Lord, speaking to us; “O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord all the earth.” Ps. 96.1. In the Psalms, we will find the genuine new song

which the Lord himself, and not *man* hath put into our mouth, even praise to our God. This expression was not contained in this Psalm, when it was first composed to be sung at the removal of the ark to Jerusalem: 1 Chron. 16. 23. It was subsequently added, when, with some modification, it was transferred to the canonical collection of Psalms, to be sung by the church in after ages. Persons need not be searching around among the poets of this world for the new song, when it is already prepared for them in the songs of the Lord. It was sung hundreds of years before the nations that were called to join in it were in circumstances to do so; and yet was a new song, as first sung by the Jews, and afterwards by the Gentiles. Newness was an essential quality, belonging to the song, which it will never lose. The same expression occurs in other places in the Psalm Book, given to the church, by the great Prophet of the church, "Sing unto him a new song." Ps. 33. 3. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God. Ps. 40. 3 "O sing unto the Lord a new song." Ps. 98. 1 "I will sing a new song unto thee, O God." Ps. 144. 9. In these cases, the epithet "new" was not applied to the song to denote that it was then recently made, or new in relation to others of an older state. For the mere novelty of it was, from its very nature, temporary, and every additional psalm that was given might, in *that sense*, be called new. But it is new in view of the great and excellent benefits it celebrates to the glory of God—it is praise ever *new*, to God as a covenant God, for his chief mercy ever *new*. It is perfectly evident, that the Old Testament believers sung, what was, and is, and will be "a new song." They sung it in singing the Psalms, and so *may* we, so *should* we, and, why not add, so *will* we, and so will we *teach our children* to praise the Lord.

In order to lower or limit the claims of the scripture Psalms, some persons have cited that passage, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah," Isa. 26. 1, and cited it, we cannot say, as if they thought it contained an argument, for they do not seem to have thought much about it, but as if the mere sound of the words, without regard to their true meaning, without note or comment to show that meaning, were enough to settle the whole controversy. We do not grant that the "day" intended, is confined to, or commensurate with the New Dispensation. If however we grant this, what are we to make of these words, or how can argument be drawn from them favorable to human hymns? Here would

be a prophecy foretelling that a given song, made by the prophet himself under the Old Testament, shall be sung under the New. Would that sanction the use of other songs made under the New Testament by them that are no prophets? No. It would rather go to establish the general principle, that the psalms to be sung under the New Testament were all made under the Old. If, in the true import of the prophecy, this particular song shall be sung, it must be sung as a part of the word of God, and gives no liberty to sing the word of man. But it may be replied, that the prophecy admits of some latitude of interpretation and that the song intended is not that very song, but songs like it. That may all be true, and yet furnish no warrant for human hymns, seeing that the only songs, like this in having the same inspiring Author and in embracing, in one or another of them, the same subject, are comprised in the Book of Psalms. They who allege, that this song could not be sung under the Old Testament, discover, that they know little about the prophecy of which it forms a part—a prophecy which the best commentators allow was first and literally fulfilled in events which took place under the Old Testament, though in a mystical sense ultimately referring to a particular momentous period under the New Testament. “The day here especially intended seems to be that future season when the New Testament Babylon shall be laid low.” *Scott*. This is also the opinion of the learned Vitringa, who also proves in his commentary that the prophecy received its literal fulfilment in the times of the Maccabees. Faber applies this song to the converted Jews to be sung by them in “the day of their final restoration, in the land of Judah.” If, in the true import of the prophecy, this *identical* song shall be sung “in that day,” if we are thus strictly to interpret the words of the prophet, in the bearing they may have on psalmody, a subject remote from the immediate and great object he had in view, still his words, under the strictest interpretation, furnish no ground of objection to the exclusive use of the psalms now by us, in the stated worship of God. Before any thing like a valid objection to the exclusive use of the psalms, can be pressed out of these words, it must be shown, *what* “that day” is, that we *now* live in it, that the *whole* church is meant by the land of Judah, that we are required to sing *this very* song, given by the prophet, and then that requirement must be *reconciled* with whatever in the holy scriptures favors the exclusive use of the psalms. We believe nothing more is designed by the

prophet, than to describe the triumph, safety, confidence and peace of the church and the grateful sense with which the church will acknowledge in praise the signal favors from the Lord, granted in the period referred to. This may be said, that this song "is suitable in its matter, to the use of the church in all ages, in the praises of God." No doubt of that. So does the whole Bible contain matter suitable for praise, but all that matter has been put into good form and fashion for our use in the *Psalms*, which are "an epitome of the whole Bible, a compendium of all theology." In singing the psalms we will sing over and over again, all the matter contained in this song.

III. As the Book of Psalms honors the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior, so it was signally honored by him and should therefore be esteemed precious and honorable by his followers.

He first gave this sacred book the appropriate and emphatic name by which it has ever since been called. That the name was borrowed from the Septuagint, is neither evident nor probable. Indeed it is very questionable whether the Septuagint itself had that name, at that time. Should not this Book be to us, what the name, it received from him, imports? In his naming it the Book of Psalms, does not his infallible wisdom thereby recommend and his supreme authority virtually enjoin, that it be used as the psalm book of his whole church? Do we wish to know where to find the psalms? The great Prophet makes this known to us. He said "that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me." Luke 24.44. We are in this passage to place the emphasis on psalms. We know the old, ill-founded, impoverishing criticism, that "the *psalms* are feet for *Hagiographia*, as being the chief book of that division of the Old Testament." Did the Lord sanction that dividing of the sacred Books, by the Jews, into three parts—a dividing which ascribed different degrees of inspiration to the several divisions, and to the last, the least, and which removed Daniel from among the Prophets, contrary to Mat. 24.15? We think not. The usual division which he made of the holy scripture was into two parts, Moses or the law, and prophets, which is also made by the Evangelist, v. 27, where the psalms are undoubtedly included in the latter part, the prophets. It may be asked, why then does Christ here particularly specify the Psalms? For the same reason that the angel said to the women, "Tell his disciples and Peter," who was one of the disciples, tell Peter

especially. So the Book of Psalms was one of the prophetic books—but that book contained many remarkable prophecies respecting the sufferings and glorification of Christ, and was distinguished in this respect above all the other prophetic book. Therefore he directed the attention of his disciples to what was “written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and *especially in the Psalms.*” Our Lord in his teaching often appealed to the Book of Psalms. It appears to have been the manual of the Son of God in the days of his flesh; who, at the conclusion of his last supper, is generally supposed, and that upon good grounds, to have sung an hymn taken from it; who pronounced on the cross the beginning of the 22d Psalm, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and expired with a part of the 31st Ps. in his mouth. Thus He, who had not the spirit by measure, in whom were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who spake as never man spake, yet choose to conclude his life, to solace himself in his greatest agony, and at last to breathe out his soul in the Psalmists’ form of words, rather than his own. No tongue of man or angel, as Dr. Hammond justly observes, can convey a higher idea of any book and of their felicity who use it aright. Amen and Amen.

We have thus endeavored from the fullness of God’s word to prove, and we trust, that by the aid of his grace, we have been enabled satisfactorily to prove, that the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms, should be used, exclusively and universally used, in the worship of God by his church throughout all ages to the end of time. What substantiates this great truth, repels all objections to it. In noticing a few of them, we need not repeat what we have said.

Some justify the use of human hymns, on the ground of its not being forbidden. “They would not,” they say, “by any means exclude the psalms; still there is nothing expressly to prohibit our singing good pious hymns and we can see nothing improper in it.” It is not safe or right, for us poor creatures and under law to God, independently to follow our own conceits, or to judge of an ordinance of God by our sense of propriety, or to conclude that a practice must be right because we think it right. As for the want of a prohibition, we say, that there is no real lack of that kind. To argue that we may do whatever a command does not in so many words, forbid, is most foolish pleading, and would make an opening for the entrance of corruption into the church, as wide as the broad road to destruction. We are bound by an

ordinance of God, to sing psalms: that forbids us to sing any thing else. The Lord directed that the sweet incense should be made of certain specified spices; was not that enough to forbid its being made of any other spices? The Lord requires that water be used in baptism—that bread and wine be used in the eucharist, and what he has thus ordained, includes a prohibition as absolute as it could be made in express words. For if wine be used in baptism, or water in the cup of blessing, the required element is wanting and the sacrament is profaned. So it is the appointment of God, that psalms be sung in his worship. When therefore any thing else, not appointed, is put in their place, they are so far put out of their place, and the ordinance of God so far set aside. Every command of God forbids what is contrary to itself and to its complete and constant observance. To argue that hymns made by man, may be sung in worship because they are not forbidden, is reasoning calculated to make void the law of God, in many things to leave the church in a very defenceless state.

Some persons throw out, "that there is no difference between praying and singing." What! no difference in the *nature* of these duties! Are they identically the same? That is what no one will say. Well, is there no difference between these two duties, in the *outward manner* of performing them? If there actually is none, then the whole question is settled. But sufficient proof to attest that there is a difference, has been adduced in proving, that the Psalms, the words of the Lord, are ordained to be sung in his praise; and the absence of such proof in regard to prayer, shows that it is of divine institution, that we use our own words in prayer. It is said, "If we may pray in our own words, we may sing in our own words." It is very troublesome to follow these trifling objections, that have not sense enough, to know what they are, nor whither they go. But our readers will perceive that this last one is nothing but an inference drawn from the premises assumed in the former. The assumption is, that there is no difference between praying and singing—the conclusion, that, as we use our own words in prayer, we may in praise: both these must fall together before the force of truth, which shows that there is a material difference between these two duties, as to the outward mode of performing them. We will make a few remarks further to expose the hollowness of this small tinkling objection which men in other respects great, are ready to rattle, whenever mention is made in their presence of the claims of the ancient Psalm Book. When they

affirm, "we may sing in our own words as we pray in our own words," what do they mean by it? They mean hymns composed by men who inserted their own thoughts in them and expressed those thoughts in words selected according to their own taste and judgment. Now, is it not plain that they who sing those hymns, do not in fact sing their own words? When there is occasion for prayer, they pray extempore in their own words. But when they sing in praise, they sing out of a book, they sing previously prepared forms. They do not use their own words, any more than they do, who pray by reading out of a Prayer Book. Let their own favorite argument be turned against themselves, and where does it leave them? It leaves them exposed, self-exposed, which is a very foolish act, to all its force, if it had any to exert. "If we have a liturgy in psalms, then we also have a liturgy in prayers. If it be wrong to introduce human composures in psalmody, it is just as unlawful to introduce human composures in prayers." This reasoning may seem to be very good against the old Psalms; but it is really just as good, or rather as bad, against all set forms of praise, or in favor of set forms of prayer; it would throw all hymn books out of the churches or bring prayer books into them all. But there is no such connection between set forms, or a liturgy in prose, and set forms of prayer. If the ground on which this vaporous objection rests had been any thing else than a marsh, the advocates of the Prayer Book would have much easier work than they now have, in defending its claims to a place before the throne of grace. All churches agree, that previously prepared forms of praise are necessary; but they do not feel themselves bound to adopt forms of prayer also. The question is not, shall we have forms of praise? but the point in dispute is, what are the forms we should use? The Bible directs us to use those contained in the Book of Psalms. But many churches make such forms as suit themselves, and change them when they please. Ask them, why they make and use forms at all? They will reply, it is because the Bible has such forms. Then we should adopt those presented to us in the oracles of God, for certain it is we will never be able to make better.

By some, favorable to a scripture psalmody, it is strenuously maintained, that there are *other* inspired songs than those contained in the Book of Psalms, and that, therefore, we are not to be *restricted* to that book in singing praise. This argument against the exclusive use of the psalms is very plausible,

because it honors inspiration, sanctions the use of the psalms, and professes to exclude all human hymns from the worship of God. What is plausible, however, on any important subject, should be examined. An argument may be smooth-faced, and on that account honestly entertained, and yet have a deceiving heart, unknown to those who befriend it. A sentiment may be fair and fragrant in blossom, and yet contain the germ of great error. It was well said by one of the old writers, in noting "a particular or two of Satan's cunning in affixing an error on scripture," that, "In any grand design of error, he endeavors to lay the foundation of it as near to truth as he can; but yet so that, in the tendency of it, it may go as far from truth as may be. As some rivers, whose fountains are contiguous, have, notwithstanding, a directly contrary course in their streams." This should make us cautious, lest, in entertaining what looks well, we entertain what will yet hurt us by its ill-doing.

The above objection to the exclusive use of the psalms, professes to carry out, to a proper extent, the great principle, that we should sing inspired songs only; and charges those against whom it is brought with great inconsistency, and, occasionally, with something worse, because that, while they approve that principle, they will not apply it to songs out of the Book of Psalms.

To this we reply, that the great principle, as stated in the objection, is not exactly the principle it proposes to carry out, nor is it the great principle of those at whom the objection is aimed. The real principle, which it proposes to carry out and apply, is, that *all* inspired songs should be sung, and no more. The difference, between what it *professes*, that inspired songs only should be sung, and what it would *apply*, that all inspired songs should be sung, is as real as what there is between saying, "We sing only what is inspired," and saying, "We sing all that is inspired." The former, in both cases, we approve; the latter, in both cases, we oppose. We repeat it, the principle, which the objection would press into application, is *one thing*; but the principle, which is applauded and argued about by those who make this objection, is *another thing*. In consequence of their overlooking this difference, they get into confusion themselves, and are the occasion of confusing the minds of some others. Instead of taking it for granted, that the great principle they are really contending for is true, or has been proved by those who are restricted to the Book of Psalms; let them plainly state, that

it can be proved from the holy scriptures that all the songs in the Bible, in the Psalms and out of them, should be exclusively sung in the church of God. Let this be proved: that is necessary before we can act upon it with understanding and good conscience. Can it be proved? Is the ground, taken up by the statement of the principle, more than what the proof will cover? Is it one inch broader than the ground taken up by the principle, in its requiring us to conform our practice to it? Those who plead for the use of the Psalms only, do not undertake to prove that all inspired song, or that inspired song indefinitely, should be sung; but that all inspired songs, *given and ordained by the Lord* to be sung, should be sung. We find that the Psalms only were given for this end; consequently, we sing no others. Our principles require us to go no further. It is no abstract theoretical principle, but the principle of obedience to the revealed will of God. If any can prove, that other songs are given to be sung; that such is the will of God, we will sing them.

It will be manifest to our readers, that the objection we are now examining, comes from a system of psalmody distinct and different from that against which it is brought. The former, which we will call the *indefinite* system, teaches, that any and every inspired song, or all inspired songs, indefinitely, should be sung in praise to the Lord; the latter, which is the *definite* system, teaches, that the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms, are the only songs appointed by the Lord for the use of his church. The two systems are as different in principle, as they are in practice—as different, in the foundation, to be laid by proof, as in the superstructure, to be raised for use. They both agree in one important point, in approving inspired songs only. So a man might discard the Book of Psalms from praise; and, in singing “the other songs” exclusively, say in truth that he approved of singing inspired songs only. This agreement in one point, does not lessen, and should not *hide*, the difference there is between the two systems, which is so great and real, that if the one stands, the other must fall. We know that the favorers of the indefinite system avow no intention to injure the others: still their system may do what they would not. They only ask, and they seem to think it very hard if they cannot get, the privilege of making the old system look better, by raising it up higher: no one has yet seen or said, *how* high. But in doing this, it would be necessary to begin at the foundation, and in enlarging that sufficiently for the purpose, it would be

found necessary, entirely to remove it from off the solid rock of divine appointment. If this work of alteration should go on, by the time it was finished, all would see that the old building, with its good foundation, had been destroyed, and something *new* raised on its ruins.

The indefinite system, when it wishes to appear to advantage, is sure to forsake its own proper ground, and to take its station on the general ground, not peculiar to it, that we should sing inspired songs. But how does it reach that high ground, acknowledged to be important? It reaches it by making a bridge of the definite system, which it first uses for this important purpose, and then, forthwith tries, with all its strength, to break down. We do not now refer to any intention in the minds of persons; but we speak of the working and tendency of the system itself. Of this we shall speak freely as need may be. For it vaunteth itself not a little on its power to do good. We say that any power of that kind, which it may suppose itself to have, is utter weakness. It promises to do great good by the free and extensive application of the great principle of an inspired psalmody. But it has not strength, of its own, even to hold that principle fast: yea, further, it secretly wars against it. How? By taking from that principle its best and tried armor; by deserting, as unworthy of occupancy, its strong holds of defence. Have the friends of the indefinite system ever proved the great principle they applaud so highly? They may say, "There is no need of that, for that is proved to our entire satisfaction by those who advocate the exclusive use of the Psalms: we do not like altogether their way of proving it, for the proof they bring, and their mode of presenting it, is, like the conclusion to which they come, too much restricted to the Book of Psalms. Still they prove, to our entire satisfaction, that inspired songs alone should be sung." The advocates of the definite system say, "We have endeavored to collect together whatever the scripture teaches on the subject of psalmody, and to connect it all naturally together, that we may know the import, bearing and conclusion of the whole; and we find that the whole doctrine of the scriptures on this subject leads us to, and confines us to the Psalms." Therefore, on the ground of proof restricted to the Psalms, we advance to the conclusion, equally restricted, that we should sing the Psalms only, and there we stop. The proof which conducts us to this conclusion, also proves that we should sing inspired songs; but the proof of these two points is so intermixed and

conjoined, that, in proving the one, it proves the other. Being bound to take the whole proof, we approve all it proves. The friends of the indefinite system, do not like our way of proving, to their entire satisfaction, that inspired songs should be sung. Let them lay aside what they do not like, all that is applicable exclusively to the Book of Psalms, as they would in proving the distinctive feature of their system, that *all* inspired songs should be sung, and we will venture to say, that they would not be able to prove that inspired songs *alone* should be sung. They, therefore, put the great principle of an inspired psalmody in jeopardy, by leaving it defenceless.

The indefinite system, in urging us not to confine ourselves exclusively to the Book of Psalms, urges to go from certainty to uncertainty, in a very important matter. It is important that we sing what is Holy Scripture, and also, that we sing *those parts* of scripture which are *songs*, given and appointed by the Lord to be sung in his church. As we are not to sing the whole Bible, it is necessary for us to know what those parts are which are songs, and which it is the will of God we should not only read, but sing, with our lips as well as our hearts, in his praise. Now, we *have* this knowledge, with respect to the Book of Psalms. We do assuredly know that all the psalms contained in that sacred book are songs, designed by the Lord for our use in worship. Whatever else is dubious, *this* is certain: whatever else is controverted, this is settled and agreed upon. So far, then, all is clear. Well, then, they who exclusively sing the songs contained in the Book of Psalms, whether they are right or wrong in singing no other, are unquestionably right in singing what they do sing. It may be said they are too restricted; they do not go far enough. Be it so. Still, it must be granted that, in going as far as they go, they go on sure and open ground, which can be seen in its length and breadth, and in its entire limits set round about by the hand of God. *Here*, then, there is certainty, on the ground of divine warrant, as to what they *do sing* in divine praise. All this necessary and pleasing certainty we leave behind us, and we enter a region of very great uncertainty, when we follow the guidance of those who advise us to sing "other songs of scripture." For they have not agreed, among themselves, what those other songs are, nor determined upon any fixed rule by which they may be known and ascertained. Their distinguishing tenet, on the subject of psalmody, is, that all songs in the Bible should be sung. Ask them to point out in what parts of the Bible we

will find all those songs? They are unable to do it. If they should attempt to make a hymn book, to contain those songs which they say should be sung, would they be able to make it so as to be sure that it contained them all, and no more? *One* might propose to insert in it only the songs which, on different occasions, were *actually* sung; but *another* might propose to insert also those parts which are *called* songs, whether they were sung or not; while a *third* might object to him, that even he acted on a rule entirely too contracted, as it limited the praises of the church to a *part* of the inspired songs, to the exclusion of other parts, and in striking disparagement of a large portion of the precious word of God. He is succeeded by *another*, who learnedly argues, that a large portion of the word of God is written in a poetic style, and, therefore, should be sung, although he does not say what, or how large that portion is. *Here*, then, is a perplexing uncertainty, when they cannot determine what parts *are*, and what are *not* songs. Why should they urge us, by every thing except a good reason, to carry out a principle, when they cannot tell us where to go with it, or where to stop with it. They may direct us to the songs of Moses at the Red Sea; to the song of Deborah, of Hannah, and a few others; but after that, their directions become more and more vague and discordant. We affirm, then, that the indefinite system, whatever it may have in theory, has not, in its being carried out into practice, any fixed or definable limits, except the limits of divine revelation. So that any one who takes it up, may, by its help and sanction, use any and every hymn book in christendom, provided he sings nothing, which it may contain, contrary to his theological opinions. Besides the uncertainty in which this self-styled scriptural psalmody is involved, from its inability to designate what parts of scripture are songs, it has another uncertainty, from its inability to prove that those parts of scripture were given to be sung in religious worship. This brings up to view the great error with which the indefinite system is embarrassed, both in theory and practice.

It undertakes to apply a principle which it is neither competent nor authorized to apply in the way and for the end proposed. That it is *incompetent*, we have already seen, in the uncertainty with which it acts and in the entire uncertainty in which it leaves the important matter which it proposes to decide. Still, those who fail to do this, may claim the right of doing it to the best of their judgment. The great princi-

ple they hold up to view, is, that inspired songs should be sung. From the use they make of this principle, they have no controversy with those who deny it. With those who admit this principle and will not use it as they do, their reasoning is short, and they seem to think, so sharp and hard-tempered, that none but a mind of iron stubbornness, can resist it. They argue, "the great principle which we maintain, you agree to—there is no dispute about *that*: there *are* other songs which you allow are inspired: how then can you reasonably refuse to sing them in praise. If a principle is good and true, can there be any thing wrong in applying it as far as it will go?" We reply, that the principle mentioned, is a great principle, which we aim to honor by conforming to it and abiding by it. But we do not feel at liberty to *apply* it, as an *abstract principle*, in deciding what we should sing. It is not by *that*, as an abstract *test* principle, *first* settled, that we ascertain it to be the will of God, that we should sing the sacred song in the scripture Psalm Book. What proves that this is the will of God, proves also the truth and importance of the principle itself. For what proves that this is the will of God, proves also, that it is a principle in the *divine procedure*, in providing and ordaining songs for the church, to provide inspired songs only. Here we find the principle applied and carried out, as to inspired songs, *as far as* Infinite Wisdom saw fit. Those who think we are wrong in not singing other songs of scripture, allow that we are certainly right in singing the psalms. Now, how do they ascertain that the *psalms* should be sung? *Not* by applying to them the abstract principle in the summary way, in which they wish us to apply it to other songs. But they ascertain this from the evidence there is, that the Lord chose and appointed those psalms to be sung in his church. Why then do they require us to do, in reference to "other songs," what they have not themselves the presumption to do in reference to the *Psalms*? If there had been five hundred songs in the Bible, and the Lord had seen fit to select and ordain one hundred and fifty of them to be sung by his church in his praise, would not the principle of an inspired psalmody, in *that case*, be applied, as far as Divine Wisdom saw fit, to the one hundred and fifty songs and to *no more*? Would not the truth and importance of the principle itself, be thereby attested? It certainly would. But would any man, or the whole church, have a right to take that up, as an *abstract principle*, to be *applied*, under the direction of human judgment, to a part or to the whole of the *other songs*.

Any right of that kind, claimed or exercised by man, is usurped, for it belongs not to *man*, but to *God*. Besides, we cannot bring our minds to think, that a great principle recognized in a divine ordinance was ever designed to be the very means of making that ordinance void. The great principle recognized and settled in the ordinance of praise, as a principle of the divine procedure in instituting that ordinance, *we* can apply, in practice, only by *obeying* that ordinance, and singing the sacred songs which it specifies, or comprises within the limits it defines. In this way, the authority of God is preserved, and the advantage of having his wisdom exercised in this matter is realized, in our being sure that we sing *those parts* of scripture which he would have us to sing. But let a man assume the right to apply the principle spoken of, as his judgment may dictate, in deciding what should be sung, on the assumption too, that he may sing any and every part of scripture to which *he* may think the principle applicable, and what is the effect? Just this—the ordinance of God, in reference to the psalms, is made of none effect, and passes for nothing. This is the way in which the indefinite system works, to the undermining and undoing of a holy ordinance of God. A man sings “other scripture songs” than those contained in the Book of Psalms, on the principle that inspired songs should be sung. What does *that* amount to? Just to this—he sings inspired songs, because they are inspired songs. As such reasoning is not very particular, what follows? Why, a large portion of the word of God, such and such parts, are songs, because he *thinks* they are. He sings then, what he thinks it is right to sing. He sings *just what he pleases*. This is the sum and end of the whole matter. All this comes from undertaking to do, what a man has no authority nor ability to do. We leave this part of the subject by saying, that the great principle of an inspired psalmody, is one of great importance, and is not left, to be taken up by men as an abstract principle, and to be applied and carried out, as they may judge best, in ascertaining and settling what shall be the psalmody of the church of God.

Some, in endeavoring to sustain the indefinite system, having a glimpse of its fundamental defect, make an attempt to prove, that the Lord has appointed other songs, than those contained in the Book of Psalms. This is looking to the right point. If any proof of that kind can be found, we will gladly lay hold of it. It will be good so far as it goes, giving us authority to sing the particular songs appointed, what-

ever they may be. For it would show, in the seal of divine appointment, that the Lord had applied, to all the songs thus marked, the great principle which he applied in giving the psalms. But proof of that nature would not give to men any more right than they now have, to apply that principle at their own discretion, and in the loose and irresponsible manner in which it must be applied, if left subject to their control. Let us now look to the supposed proof. It is said to consist in the fact, that other songs than those contained in the Book of Psalms, were sung both *before and after* that book was put, in its present form and finished state, as a collection of sacred songs, in the place it now holds among the other canonical books. As for those which we allow were sung before the canonical collection was made, we observe, that they have one thing in common with most of the psalms—they were suited to events and incidents, occurring in the history of the church, or of particular individuals. All these were laid up in the depository of holy writings. The hand of God, by man acting under his immediate direction, selected, collected and arranged those which are contained in the Psalm Book: a few others were left to remain where we now find them. Of those which are inserted in the inspired history, in connection with the occasion on which they were first sung, two were adopted into the Psalm Book—a song, in 2 Sam., 22d chapter, is the eighteenth psalm. That contained in 1 Chron., 16th chapter, forms the first fifteen verses of the 105th psalm, the 96th psalm and the first, with the last two verses of the 106th psalm. Others were not taken. These are the facts in the case. Now, by *whom* was all this done? If it had been done by men acting at their own discretion, we might then call in question the wisdom with which they acted, and the completeness of their work. We might then say, without sinful presumption, that the collection should be enlarged by the insertion of what they left out. But that collection of sacred songs was made by the great Prophet of the church, and was sanctioned by him in the days of his flesh, and by his apostles afterward, and we should not therefore directly or indirectly charge it with imperfection. Every work of God is perfect. We have no intimation, that any of the songs referred to, were ever sung after the first occasion of them. There is then, evidence wanting of its being the design of God, that they should be sung statedly in religious worship.

We have no evidence, that other than the psalms were

sung in the stated worship of God, for a long period, reaching down to the close of divine revelation. Is there certain evidence, that other songs were at *any time* sung in praise? We think there is no certain evidence of that, contained in the first chapter of Luke. "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and *spake* out with a loud voice, and *said*," in an address to *Mary*, not to God, "Blessed art thou." "And *Mary said*." It does not appear that either of them sung. Zacharias "*spake* and praised God," that is, blessed God, gave thanks. As "Jesus took bread and blessed," where the same word is used, meaning, he "*gave thanks*," and in both cases it was done in *speaking*, not by singing. "Zacharias prophesied, *saying*." His prophecy is not called a *song*, he uttered it in his ordinary voice.

What took place in the church at Corinth, affords no evidence, that other than the scripture psalms were used, with divine approbation, in Gentile churches. "Every one hath a psalm." 1 Cor. 14.26. A state of things existed at Corinth, in their church assemblies, which the apostle disapproved and aimed to correct. We should be careful not to take what may be done in a disorderly church, for a precedent to follow in a well-ordered church; not to bring for proof, in favor of a practice, a reproof against it, or against what introduced into the church at Corinth confusion, not greater than that which the indefinite, independent system of psalmody brings into some churches now. In every one having a psalm, there was something wrong—not for edification. What is meant by every one having a psalm? The psalm might have been taken from scripture; and one and another, having a psalm and reciting it, created confusion. If the person *having* the psalm, made it in the exercise of supernatural gifts, still those gifts were in this case, exercised improperly. There was somewhere, a censurable impropriety; there was something, that should not be, in every one having a psalm. Were the gifts exercised at an improper *time*, or in an improper *way*? If those gifts were so subject to the will and natural judgment of the person professing them, as to be exercised *when* he was not called to do it, might they not be exercised in *what* he was not called to do? It is certain, those gifts were not necessary to the right and orderly administration of public worship; nor was there any thing, in the proper, much less in the improper exercise of extraordinary gifts, to furnish a precedent for the conduct of the church, after those gifts ceased. But whatever sense may be put on the words, it has noth-

ing to do with the subject, since it does not appear that the psalm was sung by the assembly, nor, that every one, having a psalm, did more than show that he had it, probably by *reciting* it aloud, for the sake of displaying his gifts.

We must now close ; having already gone beyond the limits we at first intended. We have endeavored, christian brethren, to present before you the proof we had in view, when we stated, in the beginning, that it is the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, that the psalms contained in the Book of Psalms, are the only divinely authorized songs of the church. That proof is the strength, and the conclusion in which it terminates, is the point, of this appeal. In handling this proof, weighty and holy as it is, and relating as it does to the high praises of the Lord of Hosts, we have felt our own weakness, and in some degree, our responsibility. We have not handled the word of God deceitfully. What we have said, in an honest and full assurance, we believe. We may be mistaken ; but we ask no one to believe what we have said, in furtherance and defence of this ordinance of God, unless he find a better reason for believing, than that man hath said it. What we may say, will soon pass away. But the word of God will stand. The voice of our entreaty, true and sincere as it may be, for his name's sake, like a faint echo, will soon die away, and while it lasts, has nothing to make it heard, but what it receives from above. The voice that speaketh from above, that loudly soundeth near to you, in the word of the Lord, is always the same, self-sustained and abiding. In the voice of his awful authority, there is an appeal, strong, distinct, direct to you, to your understandings, your consciences and hearts. Listen to it. It concerns his praise, and he is watchful over his praise. They who worship him in truth, tremble at his word. He not only requires them to present, but directs them where they will find the appointed offerings of praise, pure and acceptable. They follow his directions. They go to the broad, bright field of divine revelation. Directly before them, when they enter it, they behold, as it were in the centre of the field, a garden enclosed, and over its gates, PRAISE. All around, over the whole bright field, to its utmost limits, there is every thing pleasant to the eye and good for food, giving strength to the weak and refreshing the weary soul. But the garden is the Garden of Praise. Its fruit is for the throne of God, and they that gather it may eat it and praise the Lord. Various, pleasant and good, is its fruit—so good that angels would be pleased to gather it, and so abun-

dant that all the angels of heaven, and all the redeemed from among men, would not be able, by their gathering, to make it less. Its trees of life, beautiful as fruitful, were pruned when planted of old, by the hand of God, and it needs not the hand of man to prune again, or to plant more. This is the appointed, perfect Paradise of praise, for the church on earth, from which we may get a good view of all the wonderful works of God, and especially a good view of the sufferings and glory of Christ, and by the light of that glory, a good view of the Paradise of praise and bliss, prepared in heaven for the redeemed. Here let us stay and keep all these things in view, and *praise the Lord*.

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